The Divine Soliloquies of Gerlac Petersen

CANON REGULAR OF DEVENTER

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN

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BY

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THOSE who fare forth on pilgrimage, at whatsoever age they set out, do well to ask after the old, well-trodden paths, to seek the guidance of those who have passed the way before them, and to look for encouragement in the pattern set by their leaders in the quest: and there can be no need to set down here other reasons for putting out a fresh English version of an old treatise concerning the life of union with God, written in another country, near six centuries ago.

Soliloquia Divina is the work of a Religious who lived faithful in his monastery, and who, having accomplished his pilgrimage, passed in peace from this world, in the year of our salvation 1411: and whose words are well fitted to lead us in our quest to-day.

The footnotes here given belong to a Latin copy of the treatise issued in A.D. 1711.

LIFE OF THE AUTHOR OF THE TREATISE

Gathered from the Chronicles of Windesheim, and shortly and simply related.

GERLAC PETERSEN was born at Deventer, and while still a youth he consecrated his life to God by taking a vow of chastity. He made this vow on the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, in what year we are not told, and he kept it faithfully for the rest of his life.

He was attracted to the study of Holy Scripture by the preaching of the Fathers belonging to the congregation of regular canons which Dom. Florentius had established at Deventer, and after he had learnt the elements of the spiritual life from them, he was passed on to Windesheim, where he continued some time.

Here he attained a degree of self-knowledge and reached a point of divine love and heavenly contemplation beyond that possessed by the professed brethren, and the devotion of his soul was even at that time manifested by certain outward movements of the body, noticed by many persons. There is a short discourse of his, beginning *"In tumultibus et accidentiis, et exterioribus," etc.*, which gives evidence of the high degree of virtue to which

he had attained, and shows how firm a foundation of the spiritual life he laid while serving as a clerk: and the same appears in a letter which about this time he wrote to his own sister. The letter begins, *Homini verè interno nullum tempus breve est, etc.* As day by day he made progress and, after the pattern set out in his book, day by day continued to amend his life, he began to long for his entry into holy Religion. His reception, however, was put off for a time, because, though his virtues specially endeared him to the brethren, his eyesight was so defective that he could not read manuscript or music from a distance, and this was a hindrance in choir. However, a certain devout clerk at Windesheim, Johannes Schutken by name, a friend of Petersen, took pity on him and wrote out for him two small antiphoners and a gradual, and added thereto the musical notation. And so at last, possessed of all that was needful, the holy man Gerlac was clothed at Windesheim, on the feast of St Andrew, 1403, and in due time he was professed. What manner of person he was in his interior life of prayer and in his intercourse with others may be gathered from the little book called *Soliloquium cuiusdem Regularis a cordis multiplicitate ad unum summum bonum, etc.* This was written for his own devotion, as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, on various loose sheets of paper and on tablets, and was not divided into chapters: but Johannes Schutken, named above, after Gerlac's death arranged the book in the form in which we

now have it, and added suitable titles to the chapters.

The holy man was endowed with many virtues and lived wholly turned towards God, dwelling in heart in heaven. He was eminent in purity, a pattern of virtues, a victim of mortification, and a mirror of entire perfection.

When he was Sacristan he often stayed in choir after the brethren had left it, and remained there with hands and eyes raised to heaven, and afterwards he would be seen passing through the choir as though inebriated with the spirit of devotion: and he used to say himself that the duty of the Sacristan was a very sacred one, since he must needs be always busied in the church and occupied about the divine mysteries.

Throughout the solemnities of the Mass and the Divine Office this holy soul felt such joy in the presence of the Bridegroom that his body seemed to be raised by the uplifting of his mind: rejoicing, he rejoiced in the Lord, and could not contain himself for joy, so that he could in truth say with the psalmist, "My heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God."

He delighted in being alone and in being engaged in spiritual duties. Sometimes, in order to take exercise in company with the brethren, he would walk to the outskirts of the town, and when on such occasions he perceived a special grace from God coming upon him, he would say, "Brethren, I must return to my cell, for there is One who awaits me there," meaning that the heavenly Bridegroom,

Christ Himself, awaited him, whose sweet converse and loving companionship he very often enjoyed.

His pleasing appearance, his holy conversation and charming manners called forth from others reverence and love, and, moreover, were signs of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

He was a man of good height, of calm and angelic countenance, pleasant in speech, quiet in manner, keeping his inner life withdrawn from notice. In trouble he was wont to say aloud, " The Lord our God liveth," and to himself, " Hasten to become perfect, thou wilt soon be called."

It was a token of his great humility and true progress that, though he was possessed of very great spiritual light, after his entry into Religion he sat at the feet of a simple clerk, namely, Johannes Schutken, and, very often on bended knees, sought to be trained and instructed by him.

None of the brethren spoke of heavenly things so freely as he ; his voice, like that of the chaste turtle-dove, was heard day and night in the land of the living : for in mind he often rose to heaven and to the choirs of Angels, as a man truly absorbed in heavenly things, and in turn he often received the visitations of beings from above. He besought the Lord that he might be plunged in the bath of penitence and in the waters of tribulation before death, and that in whatever way it should please God he might be cleansed by a purgatory in this life, saying with the

psalmist, "O Lord, rebuke me now, correct me now, not in Thy wrath, not in Thine anger," and with a Father of the Church, Augustine, "O Lord, burn now, cut now."

And the merciful Father and gracious Lord received his vows and hearkened to his prayers, and by grievous bodily pains proved and purged him as gold is tried in the furnace.

When this affliction was laid upon him, he not only bore it, but was glad, and gave thanks to God in the pain which seemed to tear him asunder: so great was the suffering, that it was as though all his limbs were being wrenched asunder at the joints, and still the force of his inward love overcame the great pain. A certain novice, whose master he had formerly been, once came to see him when he was suffering grievously, and when he shed tears of sympathy, Gerlac said, "Do not grieve over me, beloved, for though the torture should be almost greater than my weakness can bear, yet if I knew that it would be for the honour of God and for the good of my soul, I would be ready to undergo it forthwith." See the patience and fraternal charity in which he possessed his soul!

But when, after awhile, the pain had abated, he would say, "Thus should a bad servant be severely beaten, that by such correction he may learn to do his Master's will."

When God had thus tried and chastened His chosen servant, Gerlac, through many years, and when he was nearing his end, he asked the Prior to burn all the exercises of devotion

which he had written for his own use on paper, or leaves or tablets, and which he kept in his cell.

The Father answered: "Leave that to me, dearest brother, I will dispose of them in the way I think best."

When he reached his end he was strengthened by the sacraments of the Church, and as he felt death approach, he asked again and again of those who stood by for the passing bell to be rung, to call together the brethren of the convent, that they might assist at his departure: but as it seemed to them that death was not so near, they put off the ringing. The servant of God then perceiving that he must forego the presence of his devout and beloved brethren in his last hour, was not disturbed thereat, but humbly submitted to the divine ordering and to the will of his brethren, thus being obedient up to his very death. So, folding his arms and joining his hands, he bowed his head and fell asleep in peace, in the year of our Lord 1411.

After the solemn obsequies at Windesheim, his body was buried at the entrance of the choir. He had lived among the brethren near eight years as a good Religious and full worthy of praise." Made perfect in a short time, he fulfilled a long time.

THE SOLILOQUIES OF GERLAC PETERSEN

WHILE WITHDRAWING HIS HEART FROM MANIFOLD MATTERS AND FIXING IT UPON THE ONE HIGHEST GOOD

"O taste and see how gracious the Lord is;
blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

PRAYER

IN a humble spirit, with contrite and lowly heart, with affections subdued, as dust of the feet beneath heaven and earth and all things therein, but humbly hoping in Thee, O Lord, we come, even as some poor little lamb or lone straying chicken, seeking refuge under Thy wings, and ask Thee, O most gracious Father, ever mercifully to receive us.

DIVINE SOLILOQUIES

CHAPTER I

That he who would escape distraction of mind and would recollect himself within, should always look to the end of all things and refuse to be consoled by anything less than God, and should follow after none but God alone.

IN all things that happen, and that move or might move me, I will always consider the end : that is to say, I will always reflect how I should feel or behave in regard to that matter which moveth me, were I at this very instant to be called away by our Lord. And whenever I find self a hindrance, a barrier, as it were, like a veil drawn between myself and God, then it behoves me to say unto myself or to any other like hindrance, " Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me." Therefore I will so train myself inwardly and will behave myself outwardly, that all my conduct, movements and conversation may proclaim and testify that my kingdom is not of this world, and that here I find no comfort or solace whatsoever. And thus in all events as they happen will I abide, even unto the end of my life. And I will be like a broken vessel, as dead to the world, as the filth of the world, as unconsoled and forsaken by all that is in the world, as unworthy of receiving from God the smallest gift whether bodily or spiritual, or even of kissing the dust from the feet of God's elect.

And as I shall be unconsoled and forsaken by all things in the world, so let all things in the world be forsaken by me, to such an extent, that, being poor, I may be able in great enlargement of heart, and without any hurt to myself, to suffer the want of all things which the mind of man can desire out of or beside God. And even if all things happen according to my wishes or convenience, nevertheless let my soul refuse to take comfort in them.

For thus do I choose to live hidden all the days of my pilgrimage, behaving like a true pilgrim and empty-handed traveller, in order that I may in safety await the day of the Lord, being most rich, and at the same time very poor; most rich in seeking nothing, very poor in having nothing.

So also I will in no way set myself above anything or any person living, but I will strive in all things to abide inwardly close united with our Lord, because all things pass away and fail: for if I lean upon that which decayeth, then must I needs decay along with it, for the children of men are vanity, and scarce in any one is there found a fidelity that never faileth.

CHAPTER II

That a man should often consider his state of exile, that he may take refuge in God; for united to Him he will feel need of nothing.

The Voice of God to the Soul

NEVER will I forget that I am placed in a state of pilgrimage, of banishment, of contest,

struggle and war: that this will continue so long as breath remains in my body: and therefore it will be easy for me to discover where, whence, and in what way I may be supported during the short time of my sojourn here.

And if I can attain to this, to stand always in the presence of the Lord, having all things in common with Him, in a pure heart, free from all care in regard to the affairs of others, and subject to no disturbance of mind, what more can I desire? But if, on the other hand, all things were mine, and my name were praised by many, and yet it was not going well with me with our Lord, what would this profit me?

Therefore let men be anxious and put their trust in one another, one in this man, another in that, yet as for me, I will offer myself to our Lord; I will put my trust in Him with my whole heart, and I will not be anxious about anything whatsoever, or about any accidents that may happen, save only that I may be wholly His. For it is He Himself who provideth for me and He careth for me, and He it is who hath bidden me for His sake to empty myself of all that I am, and not to take upon myself the work that is His own, nor to hinder that work in me by anxious care about what may happen; but to listen to what He Himself, Who is the highest Good, is saying within me.

Voice of God. Labour, He saith, as much as in thee lieth, to stand well with Me and to walk before Me at all times and in every place and condition. Have no care whether thou please others or displease them, for the approval

of others can bring thee no good, nor can their disapproval take aught away from thee: for if thou abide in Me thou wilt be able to do without everything, without hurt to thyself, and thou shalt lack nothing.

Dost thou consider how likeness and equality cannot exist save in things that are like and equal, dost thou not know that true glory is not in need of empty honour? For virtue abideth ever far above, and is in no need of praise or of testimony from things below, but is always sufficient for itself: so also are all they who by a most fervent love are made one with virtue itself.

CHAPTER III

That in everything we have to do we should always look to the end for which it is done, to the source whence all things spring, and whither they are tending.

IF a man does not take great pains continually to examine into everything that is to be done and the purpose for which it is done, especially in the matter of the Divine Office, he will slide off into dulness and insensibility towards interior things very easily indeed, often before he knows it, and it will seem to him sufficient to have leaves without any care for fruit.

And weighed down in this way, the soul cannot lift itself up or turn itself towards Him Who alone is its origin, nor will it be able to

gaze upon the incomprehensible Light even to the degree in which it is possible to do so: for unlikeness and thick darkness rise up in opposition, and prevent the soul from gazing upon the light which, nevertheless, it was created to enjoy.

In all things, therefore, that we have to do, let us accustom ourselves to look always at the truth, and to see how the truth regards all things and to strive to conform ourselves in our measure to this same view, and to follow very diligently, with a keen-sighted gaze, the interior path that leads to the highest good.

CHAPTER IV

Of the great devotion with which Christ offered Himself once in time upon earth, and still offereth Himself unto the Father in heaven, and now offereth Himself in the holy mysteries of the Altar, to be received by us with like devotion.

WITH such love and devotion as that with which He willed to become incarnate for us, and to hold converse with us here in this wretched state of pilgrimage, as the least and poorest of all; in want, in tears, in sighs and labours all the days of His life; in persecutions, in the lowly bearing of evils, in suffering proud enemies; by spending Himself both in body and soul wholly for us: and with love like unto that incomprehensible love with which He offered Himself for us upon the Cross to

the eternal Father, a living victim, holy and without spot, that He might with joy bring back the lost sheep upon His shoulders; with so great a love, and not less, doth our Lord Jesus Christ offer Himself for us day by day without ceasing, and specially upon the Altar.

And although these afore-named proofs of love were shewn forth outwardly once for all, yet every moment are they new-given in the Father with the Holy Ghost, even as when they were first outwardly manifested: and so too all the signs of love which our Lord Jesus deigned to shew forth upon earth for our salvation should be daily so received by us, as if now, at this very instant, they were being manifested for the first time.

CHAPTER V

That virtue is to be practised solely out of regard to God and the truth; and that annoyance from one's neighbour is to be borne out of pity for him.

I WILL shew forth humility, recollection, watchfulness over the senses, modesty, and simplicity—not merely on the surface, that is to say, because perchance I may be well known to some persons, or because I stand in awe of others: to act thus would lead to great distress. For supposing I act in this way, after a time the motive for my behaving thus will fail, and then I shall become unstable

and very wavering, and I shall fall either into levity or into sadness according as outward circumstances lead: but, on the contrary, I will perform these and other like good deeds sincerely and with regard to the truth, knowing that not only now, but even unto the end of my life, such actions will be acceptable in the sight of God. And therefore I will strive always to press forward in these and like virtues.

A kind and gentle person will endeavour, when it may be so, to soothe the churlishness and passions of others rather by a modest and composed manner than by speech. So we should gently and patiently bear with one another in all inward or outward shortcomings and disorders. For every one finds the misfortunes of body or mind which he must himself suffer troublesome enough.

CHAPTER VI

That the beholding of the truth produceth humility and casteth down the pride and vain self-satisfaction which would lead the soul into darkness.

AS in the light of truth and justice I look within myself, I become conscious that there is no good in me, for I see that of myself I am nothing but an abhorrence, and that I am turned away from God and from the truth and am vanity in all things: for I have marred the image of God within me, and if it hath

been formed again or renewed as to its own form, yet I have had no share in this work; the whole is the Lord's, that through all things and in all things the excellency of the power may be of God and not of me. And now whatever thought or movement springeth up in me not in accord with that feeling of truth is accursed vanity and an abomination in the sight of God.

And I do not in any way desire to pass over or disguise such hidden impulses, as if I were of myself anything at all: but I will strive the more to abase and humble myself; and I will bravely cast them down, not by looking upon my own being as it exists in God,[1] but looking within at the truth of my nothingness in myself, that these impulses may understand that they are not truth and righteousness, but vanity and lying, nay, in fact, the devil himself.

For whenever a man faithful to the Lord feels the movements of his own pride, or of the desire of pleasing others, or of an interior but unpurified delight in the gifts of God, or of the fear of displeasing others, or of any other desire, forthwith the purity of his sight is dulled and clouded, at least on one side.

And if he look carefully into it, he will see plainly that by these movements a veil, as it were, is hung up between him and the truth, that doubts, perplexity and scrupulosity are growing: for the afore-named motions of pride, in whatever manner they may have arisen, bring others of the same kind along

[1] Or the form and idea of my soul.

with them, which are indeed nothing else but the former evils, and so a man will perceive that his trust in God is growing less: and all this he must needs suffer until his vanity fade away before the face of the truth.

Therefore humility and truth are alone safe and wide, and whatsoever is outside them is narrow and filled with fear. Indeed, all other things are cast down and are fallen away from the face of truth, and have never stood upright; but the soul is not yet so ruled by truth as to be able to see and feel that they have been brought down almost to nothing.

CHAPTER VII

That the highest faculty of our soul, though disposed to eternal things, is yet hindered in various ways: that Christ wills it to become empty, in order that He may establish us in great freedom before Him in divine things by means of conformity to the divine will.

IT is plain that I am unable to follow the height and breadth and depth of the highest affective love,[1] which is indeed incomprehensible, nor can I reach that broad expanse which in numberless respects far exceeds the whole creation, for I find that I am still held back and constrained by my own self-seeking,

[1] That is, to our soul is given a supreme faculty which in a sense may become infinite and pass beyond all creatures to eternal things and treat with them: but I am not able to follow or to do this, because I am held back.

that I rest in what is convenient and that I dread what is inconvenient, that I fear being cast down, being humiliated, or being disregarded.

But when I am thus hindered in my upward path, I will consider carefully whether it is fitting that I should be kept back by such a cause or not. If not, then swiftly and freely will I step out beyond it. The state of our mind or the upward progress of our spirit ought not easily to be shaken or held back. For it is the Lord Jesus Himself Who enlighteneth us from within; what is there that can blind us? It is the Lord Jesus Who maketh peace from within; what then can disturb us? It is the Lord Jesus Who maketh our interior ascent to be swift and free; what creature or what antagonism or adversity can depress or hinder it? "I am He," saith the Lord, "Who sanctify My sanctuary, and I suffer it not to be moved, but I bestow holy and sacred rest in the midst of tumults, and I allow no strange forms to pause within or even to enter My holy temple. For I regard as worthless anything that can hinder or depress a soul united to Me. And I judge it very blameworthy for the soul itself to be busied about what is worthless and useless, or with vain cares about future events which perchance may never come to pass, when it might be freely enjoying its own nobility in the original source of its being."

And so let the soul study, as far as in it lies, not to be kept back by those things which

spring from below; and as to those that are from above, there is nothing to fear: for not only is the soul not really held down by these, but it is even more often and in various ways invited to stand along with them in the presence of the Lord and to walk in that interior and higher region in which no narrowness is found, but a free and God-ward gaze which suffereth not the eye of the heart to be clouded over or dimmed.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the nakedness and purity of the soul in the presence of the eternal Truth, even while it perceives the forms of created things, for it sees them in God. Of the man who is blessed. Of true liberty of soul.

THE bride-soul, conformed to the divine will, guided by the spirit of truth, saith, Do ye not know now I have power by grace, to present myself bare and without form[1] before the face and the presence of the eternal, changeless Truth and unalterable Identity, which is always that which it is, and alone truly goeth forth to all things and at the same time remaineth wholly within?

And not only this: but this soul, conformed to the divine will, is able to strip herself of all forms[2] and to look into the very Truth and

[1] That is, pure, without forms and images of creatures.

[2] That is, the soul looking upon all things created, and seeing in them what is divine and supernatural, is not hindered by created forms because it is pure and bare.

Superessence of all beings throughout creation: for she does not regard a thing as though it were mere nothing, but in all things, in the least as well as in the greatest, she seeth God.[1] Naught, therefore, can easily transform or hurt such a soul, and if good and pure forms cannot lightly do this, how much less shall anything evil prevail to darken or disturb it?

And lastly, the soul, thus made free by the breaking of its fetters, and become strong in virtue, is not less blessed and endowed with virtue when abroad than at home, in a crowd than in solitude, in work than in rest, in prosperity than in adversity, and in all other like happenings: because, in fact, it is not less present with the Very Truth in one place than in another, chiefly because, being united to the Truth and Blessedness in a most fervent love, it is, as far as possible, made partaker of the same.

Now the true and holy freedom of the soul consists in this: first, to love nothing in this world, whether honour or a good name or one's own convenience, in time or in eternity; not to rest in devotions, even the most approved, nor to be moved by impure desires for any created thing whatsoever; the soul that is free is able without pain to suffer the want of all things which yet it seemeth to have, because truth lacketh nothing and knoweth not any loss of its own light: and secondly, to live without dread of hardships or inconveniences, that is to say, in fear neither of

[1] God shineth in all who are illuminated.

labours nor sorrows. And though the soul may not be suffering any of these things at the moment, the mind should not be oppressed or tortured by the memory of them; while in all reproaches and reproofs and threats the soul should not be moved or disturbed by grief or shame to no profit, but it should take these things to heart only so far as truth itself dictateth or sheweth, and no farther.

CHAPTER IX

That the contemplative life is vigorous and truly free; that it is the gift of God: that this gift worketh all things in a man who thenceforth glorieth in God alone and therein is truly rich.

BEHOLD, saith the Lord, I have bestowed upon thee a face to look upon My face: and whatever in thee is conformed to Me, so far as it is possible to be, absorbeth My beauty and reproduceth My likeness, that also have I given thee.

And I have given thee the well-ordered conversation of thine outward man, which is stronger than the countenance of all who fight against thee, more especially of those who withstand the spirit that moveth thee: so that they shall not be able to stand nor to appear in thy presence, for thy sight is full and clear to pass beyond all hindrances, and it oft refresheth thee: so that, loosed from the tyranny of all useless things, thou standest

free before Me, and thou shalt not be put to confusion.

And in that gaze of thine there is no confusion, no narrowness, no doubt nor any fear; for in it the mind perceiveth that it is made perfect in Him who is One; and seeth that she is one spirit with Him, the I Am, and that she is one with the Selfsame which is God. And thus the soul worketh all her works in God: nay, thus doth God work His own works in her, so that it is not so much she who worketh as that she herself is the work of God. And the soul doth not forego this God-ward movement for any weakness in itself in any place or at any time, or in any conditions, however grievous: but it seeth that God hath power over it through all things and that in this way it may become an instrument meet and ready for the work of God.

And thus in truth it knoweth (if so be that things have gone well with it) that God seeth by the eyes of its body, speaketh by its mouth, heareth by its ears, and through other senses it stretcheth forth towards all things with a pure heart.

And thus is fulfilled what Isaiah spake: "Thou, O Lord, hast wrought all our works in us"; so that nowhere is there left anything in which a man may boast concerning himself in respect to his own virtue or labour: but all his glorying is in the fulness of God; he findeth himself wholly, and in Him he dwelleth quietly and safely enough.

And for this he greatly rejoiceth that all

occasion of glorying in himself hath been taken from him ; that God may be all in all.

And since he thus standeth, no glory or praise is lacking to him, for he is full, being made partaker of the fulness of God.

But in whatsoever place he desireth glory, there he is assured that he is altogether empty and without honour, because whenever he seeketh anything apart from God he is but vain and empty. Thus it behoveth a man to be weak in himself and strong in the Lord, and oftentimes to give up all for all, if he will not be straitened, because he is assured that if he keepeth anything for himself as his own possession, he is thereby selling his God : for God giveth all joy in the one gift which is Himself, in order that He may be wholly ours and that we may henceforth be not beggars, but rich.

CHAPTER X

That the beholding of God experienced by the soul maketh it changeless and one with Him, and driveth away strange things ; that simplicity bringeth a man to conformity with God as though he were immovable ; and that those who seek their own profit are foolish.

IT is not enough to consider the importance of these matters, but it behoves us to know by experience that the soul looketh upon Him Who in one single gaze looketh upon all things past, present and to come, and that thus He speaketh to her. " Behold, all thy ways are

in My sight, howsoever it may be with thee, whether thou standest before Me and walkest with a perfect heart in My sight, or whether thou art become a wanderer and a fugitive, and art swayed by every chance wind. I stand firm and remain unchanging. O if thou couldest look upon Me and see how changeless is My being, that with Me there is neither before nor after, but only the self-same, that I alone Am, then wouldst thou thyself be able to be freed from unevenness and perverse changefulness and in a certain sense to be, along with Me, the self-same."

And this shewing made by God to the soul is so powerful and strong that the whole inner being, not only of the heart but also of the body, is moved and shaken in a wonderful way and falls into weakness and becomes unable to bear it. And by reason of this, the interior look is made clear and unclouded and in its own measure is conformed to Him Whom it beholdeth : and all vanity and foreign things and all that is not that self-same passeth away and vanisheth as smoke before a mighty wind.

Moreover, the outward man becomes harmless and simple, modest and gentle, humble and pliable in meeting everything as need requireth, so that he is like David, who was faithful, going in and out at the King's bidding.

And the whole being of the man is made conformable to the will of God, so as to be able to look upon all things with an even mind, on the one hand never disturbed by unfavourable or painful circumstances, or on the other

never rendered lax by prosperity: but renewed by that powerful gaze he perceives within himself a certain constant evenness of mind and sees that he is not turned to one side or the other.

By this means he will become accustomed to hold himself in readiness, so as not to be perplexed or distracted by anything happening suddenly or unexpectedly. If he do this, then God, Who is exceeding mighty, will not suffer the inner life of one so conformed to Himself to be subjected to bodily and spiritual disturbances, sufferings or distractions.

And because he wholly belongs to God and keeps nothing for himself, on this account he is comforted concerning everything which may at any time happen to him, whether coming from God or from the devil, or whether arising from the ill behaviour or troublesome conduct of men, of whatever kind it be.

He can also see, hear and call to mind every troublous thing and yet never be frightened or faint, and this because he himself hath nothing to lose, and he is sure that God cannot part with what is His own possession.

But how can such sublime matters be entrusted to a man who becometh anxious and fainteth under small daily trials, and who in the very smallest things seeketh his own convenience, interior and exterior? Where, in such a man, is the free exposure of body and spirit to all things burdensome, present and to come, by denial of himself? Where, in short, can he have that pure and naked gaze

upon the unchangeable Truth, in which all things may be perceived, if he is deeply busied with other matters, though these be not necessarily evil, and who spends thought and imagination upon them to such a degree that his mind becomes entangled and perplexed, not to speak of being absorbed in various troubles and employments, so that not even during the Divine Office, when most of all one ought to be wholly intent on worship, can he fix his gaze upon that sole Unity in Whom all things exist?

And if in an hour of ease, when he hath leisure, a convenient place and quiet, and other things to help him in the watch over his inner life, he is troubled by strange images and thoughts, what will he do in the midst of troubles and when burdened with various duties? If his mind sways hither and thither according to what is happening at the moment; if he falls in the very place in which he should be raising others; if he setteth his own convenience before his neighbours' need; if in these and like matters he fainteth and hath no power himself, but is bound fast by another power,[1] then indeed an exceeding thick veil is hung up between him and God, and in no respect is he strong enough to enter into the holy of holies, and what is more, he is not even able to look into it. And if he communicateth outwardly in the holy and divine mysteries, yet the divine equality passeth invisibly before him and leaves him no share

[1] That is, he is held back by self-love.

in that very highest good which is given to the soul according to the degree of its perfection. And what is still more wonderful, he takes part in these mysteries and has a share in them, but with great dryness, and in a certain way without beholding that which they hold within and for the sake of which they exist: and so, empty and fasting, he goeth away from that full table before which he so often outwardly standeth.

CHAPTER XI

Of diligent cleaving to the way of God, which is the Cross. How sweet is the Cross to him who doth not depart therefrom, but who persevereth therein, simply and without seeking his own ease. Of the wonderful effect of this, namely, trust in God.

" COVET earnestly the best gifts of the spirit." It is not enough that a man be not much given to vain and useless things, it behoves him also to be brave and watchful that he fail not to work by day and by night, and as a giant to rejoice in running bravely the course of the Lord, and lovingly to press forward to the contest before him, that is to say, towards the Cross of our Lord. For the whole of our life is a cross, and ought to be such, and how sweet it is, he only knoweth who feeleth it. For this cross of ours is so sweet and full of delight and security, that he who truly loveth it, if he fall away from it ever so little, findeth great bitterness and straits. What good is there

which is not in the Cross, since in it is the length and breadth and height and depth of all that can with purity of heart be desired? And as these things are found in the Cross, if a man will only remain therein he will find peace, wheresoever he may wish to go: but if he fall away from it, on every side he will be straitened. And whoever does not carefully study to abide alway in the Cross of the Lord will fall away from it at least to some degree, and what is worse, he will not perceive the bitterness of this falling away because he knoweth not the sweetness of abiding continually therein.

A man falleth away from the Cross as often as he fasteneth his eyes upon vain things which draw him from God, indeed, a hateful thing in His sight; as often as by reason of weariness in well-doing he fail in his duty; as often as he is constrained by any sort of strange fear; as often as he is moved by painful things or disturbances, or when he is influenced by any self-seeking.

But to persevere in the Cross is to strive to keep an even mind at all times in every place and in all circumstances, in prosperity or adversity, in all things which can happen to oneself, and in all things inward and outward, temporal or eternal, in every way to abstain from self-seeking and thus to die in the Lord: also it is to take no rest even in the exultation of the Holy Ghost, true and needful though this be, as if it were our own possession, and to embrace nothing at all within or without which

could become our own, or lead to self-seeking: that in all things that may happen justly or unjustly, within sight of all men or in private, no complaining may be heard, or changing or disturbance of the mind, nor, lastly, any darkening of the interior look by reason of outward happenings, but that the mind, knowing thoroughly its own state, with silent heart and quiet, humble, peaceful countenance may preserve patience, so that nothing may come upon it unprepared.

To such an one convenience and inconvenience are all the same, for he does not become lax in the enjoyment of the former nor is he straitened by the latter: but because he knoweth and feeleth that he is naturally drawn to seek his own ease and convenience, so much the more does he desire to exercise himself in what is contrary and inconvenient, for he knows that by this means he will get rid of all selfishness.

This is the straight path of the Lord, full of security for the soul and of glory in the Lord, and free from all error, so that every soul not abiding therein will be filled with anxiety and useless fear, will be beset by doubts of various kinds, will be in fear of destruction and of being cast away from our Lord.

Yet if a man love the Cross of the Lord solely on account of the great security, freedom and breadth to be found therein,[1] he is not a true lover, and in this very respect he falleth

[1] Seeking his own convenience rather than the honour of God.

away from it[1]: but when a man living in the Cross hath resigned himself wholly to our Lord and is altogether His, then God in a certain way doth resign Himself wholly to him and becometh his possession, and the man becometh rich and lacketh nothing, nor doth he desire anything. Lo! what a change!

But further, if only for the sake of this change the man resign himself and study to please God,[2] he is not pure and straight, but narrow and impure; and this in itself is in a certain way to fall in a great degree away from the Cross. But yet, though a man thus seem to be, in a manner, dead to all things, yet it behoveth him to proceed according to the needs of the case and the presentment of the truth, by laying open his whole being to meet all things, the best as well as the greatest, so that even with regard to the conveniences of the body and its needs, such as sleep, rest after fatigue, refreshment and other like matters, he proceeds with such purity of heart and simplicity that he may have no cause to be ashamed before the Lord.

If anything serious happen to him, of what ever kind it be, he will remember that he is on the Cross of the Lord, and that nothing else is due to him, and he will desire naught but the Cross; though indeed it must needs be that he find the Cross grievous and troublesome, until such time as with his whole heart he long for it and bear it.

[1] Because God Himself is not his final aim.

[2] It is the part of a pure soul to seek God for God's sake (Augustine).

And if in some matters pertaining to the body[1] he suffer want, or if he have been left without certain things, though should he possess them he will be no happier and if they be withdrawn he will be no less happy, it is in no way the will of the Lord that he be distressed on this account, or that he should think himself to be less fortunate by reason of this lack. And even if he should see that in the eyes of certain men it is taken to be a grievance and a trouble, and if they look upon him less kindly than before, this is not a matter for wonder; for truth itself suffereth from envious persons, how much more our weakness?

One man cannot possibly please or satisfy all; this did not even the most perfect conversation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh. One must, however, always take account of humble amendment in those persons aforenamed, if there has been an endeavour to do what was possible. He who shall have his mind thus engaged with the Cross of the Lord can in nowise be put in fear by any contrary things by day or by night; they will not last for ever; and he considers himself ready to endure all things which for the honour of his Lord may happen by His ordering or permission.

For if he truly loveth righteousness, then in whatever way God may see fit to punish and correct his excesses and backslidings, he cannot wish otherwise; and if He should will him to be in purgatory, this also will he desire,

[1] That is, if he suffer from some bodily defect.

in order whatever that there hath been in him contrary to justice and truth, may be purged away.

To die and to live he considereth in some sense one and the same thing : and he feeleth no great sorrow at the departure of a thing, because he was not elated at its coming, nor when he possessed it, did he rest in it.

For what is there that can approach to comfort him who enjoyeth the highest Good and very Blessedness, that is God, Who is neither increased nor diminished by anything that happens ? For this very Blessedness hath nothing in common with what happeneth by chance, so that he who is blessed [1] would not be more blessed even if he were surrounded by every luxury, and if all were to leave him he would not be less blessed. And although this seems a wonderful thing to say, yet there is no presumption in feeling it, because it lieth not on the surface, but cometh from a deep union and conformity with God ; and a man unacquainted with this, that is, the carnal man, can in no way attain to it, for great unrighteousness hath dominion over him ; and even if his confidence be great, yet is it entirely groundless unless it spring from union with God and from renewing of the mind. But perchance some one may say that we should not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but think soberly. That is true, but what is it to think soberly ? Is it not to remember this, that we have been made

[1] That is, united with God in his inmost being.

in the likeness and image of God and that we should be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect? Is it the will of our Lord Jesus, Who prayed to the Father that we might be one even as He is in the Father and the Father in Him, and that being made perfect in one we might know that the Father loveth us as He loveth the Son, and Who prayed also for many like gifts, is it His will that we should turn away and be wanderers from our Father and strangers to Him? And again of inward certainty blessed Peter saith, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." If this and such like wisdom is contrary to God, then is God altogether contrary to Himself: but this is nothing else than in all things inwardly and outwardly, in time and in eternity, to be at the beck of God and subject to His will, and that in us there should be no unlikeness to offend the eye of the divine goodness, and that a man, so far as he exists in himself, be nothing, but God all in all, and yet that he, being in God and with God so far as it is possible to be, may be everything.

But what if "the judgements of God are like the great deep"? A great deep indeed! And also this: "A man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hate."

Nevertheless God cannot lose what is His own, for He can do naught against Himself. If He hath united a man to Himself, and the man is in a certain way made to share in that which is the character of God, namely, justice, power, truth, and equity, will not God love Himself

in that man? For how could the prophet say in his exultation, "Thy judgements shall help me, my delight shall be in Thy commandments; I remembered Thine everlasting judgements, O Lord, and received comfort; I have a good hope because of Thy Word": and many like words, if he has not wholly gone away from himself, that is to say, in respect of vices, and in the region of likeness to God he had become in a certain way righteous, knowing most surely that God could not condemn him?

But there is another region in the soul, the region, namely, of dissimilitude, or unlikeness, full of snares and fetters, tribulations, groans and distresses; where there are found thorns, very great dejection, destruction, confusion and opposition, arising from the consideration of our own weakness, as well as from the manifold failures of the inner and outward man, which latter is daily perceived and experienced more than is desirable.

In this region thorns and thistles grow freely and plentifully, in one man more, in another less, and scarce any man keeps his soul free from these useless weeds. In this region we have great need to pray with the prophet David, "Enter not into judgement with Thy servant, O Lord; put me not to rebuke, O Lord, in Thine anger; O forsake me not, for I am afraid of Thy judgements."

CHAPTER XII

Though the upper region of the mind may be invaded by vices which cause its vision to be clouded, yet the help of God, hidden though it be, is always at hand, and that one must cling to Him and reach forward to Him.

A WHOLE train of vices and manifold hindrances and strange impulses sometimes attempt to obtain the mastery in the upper region of the soul, and they boast and reproachfully say, " Where is thy God; where is thy kingdom and the guardian thereof? " So is it we who have the rule and dominion, not only in this earth of thine, but also in thy heaven, and we are not now driven out, as aforetime we were wont to be driven, by that pure, bare and perfect gaze, before which we were unable to stand, for now we have greatly clouded it and it easily yieldeth to any trifle. And we do not pay great heed to the more serious duties, so long as the soul can be hindered by very small matters, such as strange and unrestful occupations, and so long as it can be kept content within the straits in which we hold it. And although the soul be not greatly drawn towards us, yet by these means it is made slack and lukewarm, and is led to perform its duties without fervour, merely from custom. But would that this state of things of which we boast might continue, for we are in dread lest one stronger than we shall come upon us, and cast us out and keep us at a distance, so that no longer shall we find

an entrance nor even dare to come near the place where at one time we dwelt secure, but where now we are in fear: for it seemeth to us that the Lord will fight against us on behalf of this man. And although we have oppressed him, yet behold how the groans and deep sighings of his heart and the tears not only of his inward but also of his bodily eyes seem to rise up to the Lord, Who hath even now determined to deliver him from his slavery of many kinds, and to restore him to his former freedom: and if this be granted, he will strongly oppress and condemn us, so that we shall not even dare to appear in his presence.

We ask therefore, Lord, that if Thou cast us out, Thou wouldest leave to us at least a small and secret entrance, so that if perchance Thou shouldest abandon him for a little while, we may then boast of our former control over him. And if Thou wilt not do this, then at least cause that beggar, or whatever he may be, to know that we will not cease day or night from attacking him, so long as any breath remaineth in him: we will multiply snares for him so that wherever he turns he may be taken captive for a while. We will forestall his vigils, so that if perchance at dawn his eyes have not been turned toward the Lord, we may come beforehand and take possession of his mind. We will tell him all kinds of tales, and will place before him various fantasies, especially at the Divine Office, whensoever he faileth to reflect how he should love the law of

the Lord and how with open face [1] he should come into His presence.

For we know how to prepare snares wherewith to deceive him, and what we cannot do ourselves we will endeavour to accomplish through others or by those who are in some way acquainted with him, so that he may suspect nothing underhand.

For who is he that can escape our hands through everything and in everything? Many and great persons have we cast down: let us then in no way despair of this poor beggar who thinketh himself to be somewhat, and who yet lieth far beneath the feet of those who once were very notable and enlightened.

Then when the Lord beholdeth this violent onset of various temptations and hindrances, and seeth that the man is left to himself, and when He considereth his moaning and his efforts and the boasting of his enemies, what saith the Lord to this? "I am in My holy temple," saith the Lord, "let all the earth keep silence before Me, and all strange boasting, let it not even appear. Know ye not that I am the Guardian of Mine own kingdom? And if for a moment I left the man to himself, to prove if he would be found faithful and steadfast—as indeed he hath been found—think ye that, though I was hidden, I was not present? For although ye have attacked him vigorously, yet he hath trusted in Me and hath not placed himself beside you. In vain, therefore, have ye boasted, and behold ye abide not, nor have

[1] That is, with a pure heart. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

ye ever abided in the truth, for the truth is not in you, and they who agree with you are like unto you. As I live, shall ye not be shut out of My kingdom for ever and lo, now ye fear; and wherefore, if not because ye are false, for there is never fear except where there is no truth. And ye have threatened to attack him and to multiply snares for him as long as he liveth, if so perchance he may be brought down and be taken captive, as ye have taken many others. This is true indeed, but wherefore fell they? because they abode not in the truth, for they were formed in themselves, not in Me."

But to this man I say, "Be strong and of a good courage and faint not in thy labours. Indeed, there remain yet many conflicts, many temptations, many forsakings and tribulations by day and by night, even to the last moment when thy soul shall go forth from thy body, but still, fear not in their presence. Play the man and finish thy course, for it is short: and suffer not any weariness to creep in while thou art fulfilling thy task.

"Whensoever they shall overpower thee, thou shalt yet be found wholly and entirely in Me, and there will be no cause for fear, if thou shalt stand before Me in truth and in simplicity, and in sincerity of heart shalt walk before Me, if in all thou hast to do or leave undone thou shalt fasten thine eyes upon Me, and if thou takest care to be conformed to Me in virtue: if thou shalt place all thy care and anxiety, thy hope, thy strength, thy glory

in Me, and shalt glory in nothing at all save in My Cross: and if thou shalt deny and wholly forsake thyself. For thine enemies will not seek thee in Me, but if they find thee in thyself, lo, then indeed will come attacks, and doubts and fear lest perchance thou may be overcome.

"Let them, therefore, be increased that trouble thee within and without: but if thou place thyself near Me and take refuge in Me, thou shalt have no fear of all them that war against thee, for I will hide thee privily by Mine own presence so that no strangers will discover thee. Thou art indeed in the midst of snares and among many enemies, but thou shalt dwell amongst them beneath My shadow until I call thee. And if I delay, still wait for Me with thy soul prepared, and ever remember how thou mayest offer thyself as an acceptable sacrifice unto Me."

CHAPTER XIII

Invitation to gaze upon God. Hindrances, delays, searchings on our part. Colloquy between God, the Angels, and our souls.

"COME unto Him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be ashamed."

And who shall be able to stand before Thine unveiled face, Lord Jesu? Thou dost often exhort me, and biddest me stand before Thee and look upon Thee, and how shall I be able to do this unless Thou take away this veil, so

thick, which is hung up betwixt Thee and me? For although, on the one hand, I rest in Thee, standing beneath Thy gaze unashamed, having all things in fellowship with Thee, yet, on the other hand, I remember and am aware of my own weakness and mine unlikeness to Thee, and, remembering this, I am greatly moved with fear. On the one hand I hear Thee saying, "My son, all that I have is thine, and behold the heaven and the earth are full of My glory," and on the other hand thou sayest, "What have I to do with thee who art subject to vanity: what communion hath light with darkness and what fellowship is there between truth and vanity?" And would that this former might outstrip the latter and that mortality might be swallowed up of life, vanity by truth, darkness by light. But however it may be, when by Thy power I have overcome all hindrances I will more often than ever look towards Thee.

And if I rejoice so eagerly and find mine eyes failing before the brightness of Thy wisdom, while I behold Thee in so slight a degree, and that only through a veil, what would happen if Thou wert to shew Thyself to me openly?

O when will this be? Thinkest Thou that it will ever be?

The Voice of God. Be faithful, it shall be.

The Soul. But when?

The Voice of God. When I shall call thee. Only do thou make ready thy soul and wait for Me, lest perchance when I come thou be

unprepared and not fit to see Me openly, for with dimmed and weak eyes thou canst not behold Me.

The Soul. Even so, Father, Thy will be done: but now I will bemoan to Thee the suffering of my own exceeding wretchedness, while Thou hidest Thy face so that I see Thee not; and when Thou withdrawest Thy face, unless Thou at the same time leavest some sign of Thy presence by which I may receive strength from Thee, straightway I shall fail in doing that which Thou hast sent me to do.

The Voice of God. And if I delay to reveal Myself, what wilt thou do?

The Soul. I will await Thee and I will hold converse with mine own darkness and will say within myself, "Will God absent Himself for ever; and will He be no more entreated? Hath God forgotten to be gracious and will He shut up His loving-kindness in displeasure?" Nevertheless I will keep faithful to Thee and I will rejoice in my poverty and I will in no way admit any consolation until Thou reveal Thyself, but the tears of mine eyes, both inward and outward, shall flow more freely, until they reach even unto Thy presence, and my tears shall be my meat day and night until they who trouble me see and feel that "Thou art my God and my refuge," and that Thou hast not wholly forsaken me; but that by hiding Thy Face Thou hast proved me, whether or no I be found faithful.

The Voice of God. And if I should wholly forsake thee?

The Soul. If I were to know this for certain, I confess from the bottom of my heart, this very heart with which I love Thee, that day and night, as long as any breath remained in me, I would do no less than if I knew for certain that I should never be separated from Thee. Do therefore whatever is right and pleasing in Thy sight: in Thy hands I am, both body and spirit. Wheresoever I go, there will I praise Thee and will rejoice exceedingly, and if not everywhere rejoicing in Thy mercy, yet at least in Thy justice, and whatsoever I know is pleasing to Thee, after that will I strive. Lay, therefore, upon me Thy healing plaster, of whatsoever kind it be, heavy or light, wheresoever Thou knowest there are wounds, especially in mine eyes: for Thy sake I will suffer it willingly, only let me be cured, that I may become fitted for the sight of Thee.

And yet, who will console me when Thou leavest me? Straightway, even unsought for, many little consolations suddenly meet me; I would rather call them little desolations, for they are all burdensome, because in some poor small way I have found how sweet is Thy Cross, and so to fall away from it, even ever so little, is to me bitterness and sorrow. I would choose the most painful affliction and death rather than knowingly allow to enter in comforts from without, whencesoever they may come: and if sometimes a consolation happen to creep in, from want of care on my part or because my love for Thee is yet so feeble, yet doth it bring me no rest in Thee.

And behold, there speak to me those who love Thee and who gaze upon Thee unhindered.

Voice of Angels. Why dost thou so often stand looking up to heaven, why dost thou gaze and sigh after Him Who dwelleth in light that no man can approach unto, for it is He Who hath made darkness His secret place and the clouds His chariot? And though clouds and darkness are round about Him, yet righteousness and equity are needed for the beholding of His unveiled Face, and a holy walking in the truth is the foundation and preparation for coming to His seat, that in the soul, as on a throne, He may be seen. This is He at whose presence the mountains melt like wax, and not only the mountains, but the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and the very soul itself, melt away and fail before His unveiled Face, as thou wilt be able to prove for thyself when thou standest in His presence to contemplate Him.

Consider, therefore, first how thou shouldest stand in His sight, and with what a pure love He ought to be loved and how well purified should be the gaze that is fixed upon Him. And next and above all, let it not be with blear but with clear eyes that thou lookest upon His glorious Face, and then see if all things do not melt away at His presence and thou thyself together with them, and make known to us also how He appeareth to thee, for this is our great desire. And if thou wilt hearken, we will speak thus: O that thou couldst take thy place with us and learn how glorious is

His Face; then indeed would all other things whatsoever be to thee as naught! O that it were allowed to thee to penetrate into that great deep, not only in the overflowing delight which can be enjoyed on earth, but in the very Fount of thy being and of all beings, of Whom are all things, and in Whom are all things, God, all in all.

The Soul. See, I am but a poor little creature, lowly and small, more wretched than all who live on the earth, and very often within am I greatly overclouded, how then shall I be able to do anything unless He, of Whom ye speak, shall shew me His Face? For ye exhort me as if it were in my own power and as if it lay in my own hands to present myself formless [1] in His presence, and as though I could overcome every hindrance, and then look upon the Face of Him Who dwelleth in the light unapproachable: whereas I am still burthened with the weight of my corruptible body and am often to be found in the region of unlikeness and of my own darkness, where I have need, not as a rich person [2] to plead before the Face of the Lord, or as one who is just and pure to dwell in His sight, but rather as a poor man, to lay myself down humbly at His feet.

Then next ye tell me to look upon His Face in the manner that ye gaze upon It, and that I should do as ye do, as if I already beheld it

[1] That is, as a pure spirit.

[2] That is, it is not given to me to speak with the Lord face to face; this belongs to one rich in spiritual things.

and were sure that I was freed from all contrary things, and, thus delivered, had been restored to my original state: but far from this being the case, I regard myself as cast out into the deep of my own darkness, away from the sight of His eyes, so that at times I scarcely dare, I do not say, to look upon Him, but not even so much as to raise mine eyes. What wonder is it if ye can gaze at His Face without turning away, dwelling as ye do, in a certain sense, in the very entrance-court of the palace of the most Blessed Trinity, hindered by no bodily forms or images as I am? Ye make use of neither memory nor understanding of the senses, nor by means of created things are ye led up to gaze upon and love the Highest Good; but unchangeable ye take your stand with the Unchangeable: with Him and in Him, the very good Itself, are ye good, as ye are made partakers of the Being of Him Who is the very Essence of all things.

Ye cannot, indeed, lose the personality of your own being and become that very Being, but ye are so united with Him that not even for a moment are ye torn away from His countenance: nor are ye said to be free in such a sense as to imply that at one time ye had been enslaved by some kind of vice, as indeed with sorrow I must confess has been the case with myself. For so great and overwhelming are the weaknesses from which I suffer and by which I am distracted, that for their very number they cannot be counted, and so wherever I would go forward either

using my body or my mind, there they meet me, though indeed I am unwilling, and I struggle earnestly against them. They cloud the clearness of the mind with which I am wont to look upon Him until He, as a tender Father, reveal His Face and hide me in Himself, so that I may not be found by strangers.

But how long shall this last? Who will give unto me, if not yet without break, yet at least very frequently, to see myself standing before His Face and walking in the light of His countenance?

Yet, however seldom it may be that He reveal Himself to me, and I look upon Him, I confess that at the moment in which this happens, not only do all other things vanish, but also the inward powers of the inner man dissolve in love and flow away. For so mighty and searching is this revelation that almost nothing of myself remaineth, and although I am so wholly helpless and poor, yet His demands upon me are so many and so great, that when I have given all I have or can do, I seem to have paid nothing at all.

But in this state of extreme poverty, nay rather in this exceeding riches, I find nothing more wholesome or more acceptable to God than to resign myself wholly to Him for all things that may happen, that He Himself may pay on my behalf what He asks of me, and that I may not in anything be a lover of myself, save in this one respect, namely, that being united to God I may love myself and all things in Him, through Him and for

Him. For this is the will of God, that I should love myself for the same purpose for which He loveth me, and for no other, namely, that I may be wholly and entirely His, and may be transformed into Him. And when thus I shall love myself and all things, I shall love nothing in myself or of myself, but my God alone.

CHAPTER XIV

The sight of God discloses to the soul that abideth in the divine light, His eternal and unchanging love: that power to conquer the enemies which attack the soul in its inferior part is to be sought by prayer.

THANKS be to Thee, O my Light, Eternal Light, Light unfailing, O highest and changeless Good, before Whose presence I Thy poor and humble little servant stand. Thanks be to Thee. Lo I see, I see a light shining in the darkness.

And what seest thou in that light?

I see that Thou lovest me exceedingly, and that if I abide in Thee it will be as impossible for Thee not to take care of me at all times, in all places and in all circumstances, as it is impossible for Thee not to care for Thyself. And Thou offerest to me Thy whole self, to be mine whole and undivided, if at least I remain Thine whole and undivided. And since I am thus wholly Thine, even as Thou hast loved Thyself from all eternity, so from everlasting Thou hast loved me: for this is

saying nothing else but that Thou art delighting Thyself in me, and that I by Thy grace am delighting Thee in myself and myself in Thee.

And when I thus love myself, nothing else but Thee do I love, for Thou art in me and I in Thee, knit together as one and the self-same thing, which, so long as it abides in this state, cannot now or ever be divided.

And when we human beings love good qualities and virtues in one another, this is nothing else but a way in which Thou lovest Thyself.

But if I abide wholly and entirely in Thee, as it is impossible for Thee to perish, so is it impossible for me. And in this union I have no need to turn away from created things however mean and unsightly they may seem, since all things were created very good, but I must so stand in the midst of all things as to be turned towards all without sensuality and to be turned from all without feeling weariness or trouble.

And looking upon myself in this light as from the lower part of my soul, I see that I am in great and thick darkness, and I abhor myself, and can scarce endure myself. Here do I suffer the reproaches of mine enemies, of many hindrances and of useless occupations by which I am often bound and fettered while they constantly seek to obtain possession of the whole kingdom of my soul, in its higher part, and boast sometimes that they already have possession of the lower.

But lo, as I stand before Thee, in Thee and

not in myself, I hear a voice very fearful, speaking for me, and saying to those who harass and trouble me: "Come not nigh hither, for the place in which he standeth upright in Me is holy and consecrated: and ye have no part in him, neither is there anywhere a point of approach for you."

But they answer: "What care we if we cannot reach him in that place? How long will he stand there? He will presently suddenly sink down to us and into the darkness which he knows so well, and then we will take possession of our ground as usual."

But how long, O Lord, shall these Thine enemies and mine utter reproaches against Thy temple and the throne of Thy glory? How long shall I take counsel in my soul against one thing and another, day and night, till at length at the one moment all be cast down and make no attempt to rise again? Lo, now one saith "I will rule": another saith "I": a third saith "It is I who will first take possession of this place"; and every perverse and false imagination seeketh to have a foothold and authority within Thy kingdom.

I beseech Thee, therefore, O Lord, that this accursed Dagon which hath been set up close to the ark of Thine everlasting testament, and still worse, even at times above the ark, may fall utterly prone upon its face, and, thus deprived of its strength, may not so recover as to be set up again in its former place.

Let all the idols of sins and vices, I beseech Thee, be cast down from the throne of Thy

glory, that Thou alone mayest reign thereon and that I be no longer so wretchedly unstable and a runaway from Thee.

CHAPTER XV

That righteousness, truth and the glory of God are to be sought only in the Cross of the Lord, and that they are to be loved without seeking of self or one's own convenience.

HE who truly is on the Cross of the Lord and embraceth the Cross, he it is who loveth righteousness and truth and seeketh not his own comfort or honour and glory either now or ever, but at all times and in all places, only the glory of God.

So it follows that even were it for the greater honour and glory of God that he should be for ever in the lowest hell, rather than in the eternal glory of God and of the Angels, he could will nothing else nor could he feel either contradiction or resistance within.

And if this is the case in serious and profound matters, as indeed it is, how much more will it be so in very small matters and daily happenings, namely, in heaviness or vexation or weariness, pain of body or mind, for all these certainly come upon us by the disposal of God.

Therefore the soul should be wholly and entirely stripped of self-seeking and should be united in all things to the will of God and to His ordering of all things, and not be moved

hither and thither by every wind that blows: for if a man be drawn in this or that direction according to his own choice and convenience, then in truth he doth not yet possess nor perceive that only One and the self-same for Whom all things exist.

CHAPTER XVI

He who cleaveth to God in simplicity and purity lacketh nothing, and is to such a degree secure, that under no circumstances can he either be injured or be in want.

A TRAVELLER with empty hands and without a burden on his back makes his way everywhere with ease.

The Truth itself saith, If thou hast Me, what more dost thou need? What is lacking to thee, or what is there in Me unpleasing to thee, that thou shouldest be caring anxiously for other things which happen from without?: for in whatever way they happen they can bring nothing to thee nor can they take aught from thee.

Dost thou look for a state of blessedness while still on thy journey? Why dost thou not ponder more deeply that thou art a pilgrim, and yet more, one exiled and banished, bound by many fetters, and lying in many a kind of bondage to which thou art not accustomed.

Recall to mind whatever thou wilt of external things: for if thou art united to me and in heart remainest my faithful and true friend,

then in whatever way things happen they can neither hinder nor help thee.

Be thou therefore as one on a journey, free and in the upper region of thy soul unhampered by burden or bondage of any kind, outward or inward. And if thou wilt thus remain, everywhere and at all times thou shalt walk in safety, for thou hast nothing that can be lost. But if thou possessest aught and holdest it fast as thine own, whether it be something exterior or something interior and spiritual, well dost thou fear the loss of it, because it lies in an open and unsafe place where thine enemies can come and snatch it away.

On the other hand, if thou art entirely poor and stripped bare, then I will be thy riches, thine honour, thy glory and thy strength : and doubt nothing, for I cannot lose Myself.

Do therefore carefully and promptly all outward things that have to be done by day and by night as much as lieth in thee, and as for the rest, be quite content. For nothing can happen so wretched, so evil, so desperate, so abject, nor can any accident so serious happen in regard to outward matters, but that there will always remain [1] within thee the highest counsel, steadfast, firm and unchangeable, and to this it is of little moment how the exterior matters in any circumstances turn out, whether in this way or that.

For of all the things that thou canst imagine, what if this or that shall happen? Am not

[1] The superior reason enlightened by the Holy Spirit remaineth.

I thy life, and do I not live ? Thinkest thou that I pass away along with passing things and that I am turned hither and thither as thou art ? Behold I am all thine, what more dost thou desire ? And if thou hast Me, am I not all things to thee ?

Why, then, dost thou not abide steadfast in Me, enjoying Me the supreme, changeless and most excellent Good, for Whom thou wast created ? Have I not promised thee that I will take care of thee in all things that may happen ; and that if thou wilt be faithful unto Me, I will be with thee whithersoever thou goest.

And if I be thy life, as indeed I am, thou wilt be able to suffer the want of all other things without any harm to thyself.

Will not all things forsake thee ? If thou reliest on them thou wilt remain wretched and forlorn. And if all things happen according to thy desire and if thou shouldest succeed in all external matters, yet in the hour of death, if I be left aside or apart from thee, no confidence or security can be drawn from them.

CHAPTER XVII

General rules for a life lived in the presence of God.

AT all times, in all places and in all circumstances, and especially when present at the Divine Office, I will stand before the Lord, all

my faculties drawn into one, with a most lowly heart and in humble posture, lovingly subject to all the world, as though I were the dust of men's feet; and I will flee, like some little child or a poor little lamb or a lone straying chicken, to take refuge in the care and beneath the wings of the Lord Jesus.

Then with deep reverence will I converse with open face before His Face, with a mind undisturbed, clear and quiet, and with readiness and gravity both within and without.

Within I will guard against aught that springs from human love or fear, convenience or inconvenience, and without against softness, restlessness, idle employments and distraction of the senses.

And so with soul renewed and with an intent mind I will search out the meaning and significance of the Holy Scriptures and of the Sacraments: first by my memory, that is to say, avoiding all complicated and unsimple thoughts which are unprofitable, by always going forward honestly and with a mind even and set free from all strange anxiety and evil affection, so that whatever facts or possibilities may come into my memory, yet my soul, having no care about itself, consoled in regard to other things and wholly resigned to God, may on the one hand not be wounded and in consequence turned aside to little things or great, and on the other hand may not be depressed by the fear of what might be burdensome or tiresome.

And secondly, I will search the meaning of Holy Scripture and the Sacraments by my

reason,[1] that is, I will without delay in great freedom follow after the Eternal Wisdom Itself, the changeless Truth, Righteousness, Equity and Peace, observing in what manner they go forth to all things, and I will look upon and accept all things, facts and possibilities, as in the Truth and Wisdom, that is, as they really are, and not in any other form.

And lastly, I will do this by a will reformed, earnestly and readily going forth to do all that I have to do.

Let my soul then strive daily to go forward in God, to leave [2] aside and altogether lose itself, so as never to find itself, but to reach unto a profound nothingness or abjection of self, to die to itself and to all things in God, and only to have its life from Him and to do all things through Him.

CHAPTER XVIII

That the unitive and contemplative life is most pleasing to God, excellent in itself and acceptable to the Holy Trinity : that it is not to be disturbed by activities and external things, which nevertheless must have their place and be attended to.

AFTER having made a close examination and careful investigation of everything, I find that there is nothing sweeter, more glorious, more

[1] Or understanding.

[2] We then go forward in God, when, grounded in Him, we fall away from ourselves (St Gregory).

acceptable to God and more full of all glory and gladness, or possessing greater abundance and wealth, than for the soul to unite itself completely to the highest and changeless Good, which abideth ever from all eternity immovable, and which no accidents can reach, for It standeth not in need of time or place. And in this way the soul is brought back to its original form and becomes one with the One, that is to say, with God Himself. For as God, Who is the Highest Good, is Virtue, Truth, Righteousness, Eternal Wisdom, ever abiding That which is, delighting in Himself and loving Himself in all things; so the soul, made partaker of the divine nature, hath abundance of delight and joy in all things.

It standeth, passeth on and goeth forward, with God and in God, and is so much the greater in God as it is less in itself, because in all things it hath forgotten itself and hath passed over into God.

And it is clothed with the light of the Eternal Wisdom as with a garment, and it is surrounded on all sides by Truth and Equity as by an impregnable shield and is aglow with burning charity.

For as iron when heated becomes all fire, so the soul united with love becomes all love, though keeping its own essential nature, which must needs remain different for ever.

And so the soul, united with God, ought to do whatever it has to do wholly through God and in God: and frequently to look at the Truth, the Eternal Wisdom, Justice and the

Highest Good, to see how they look upon all things, at what is like and unlike, equal and unequal, good and bad, at things within and things without, and nevertheless to stand unchangeable.

Thus also it is the part of the soul to strive by great efforts, in its own measure, to become one with that look and to forget itself, so far as it is able to do so.

And this gaze is boundless, not restricted on any side, and so eager, mighty, keen and strong, that no power and nothing strange can remain in its presence: for whatever is not truth or in the truth is vanity, and vanity hath never stood, nor can it ever stand, before the face of truth.

And the soul is thus conformed according to its own measure, unto the Holy Trinity, by the three powers which it possesseth:

First, the soul is like unto the eternal *Father*, Who is without beginning and is from none; in regard to its *memory* which in a certain way may be said to contain and hold all things and from which all things proceed. By the memory also the soul, if it be stripped bare and free from all strange forms that have power to change it, is so conformed that it suffereth no fancies to lead it, but powerfully worketh all things and altogether scorneth to occupy its own noble nature with such worthless matters.

And secondly, the soul, in respect of its *reason*, is like unto the *Son*, Who is Truth itself and the Eternal Wisdom. By means of its reason it is conformed to God, if in all things it hath

walked in the sight of the truth, and if it understands all things, temporal and eternal, outward and inward, equal or unequal, all things that are made, or are done, to be such as they really are: and if this be so, then in nothing can the soul be easily straitened.

Thirdly, the soul is like unto the *Holy Ghost*, in regard to its *will*, through which it becometh conformed to Him; if when the memory receiveth nothing strange or useless, the reason or understanding receive nothing save what is good and true and just, then the soul with all its affection is moved by the will, and it strongly desireth what the memory and the reason judge should be desired and loved.

And this is the true happiness of the soul, which will be pleasing to God and near to Him in the full perfection of beatitude according to the degree of its approach to Him, or perfection and conformity to Him in this life.

If we treat of the abundant and wide entrance into that Immensity wherein those aforesaid attributes of God are to be found, namely, Truth, Peace, Love and the rest, still they cannot love and take delight in themselves. Here, however, we are not speaking of those things that are external, that is, the manner in which they take place, thus or thus, for or against, desired or not desired, for none of these things can affect the soul in respect of the conformity and renewal of its higher nature.

And although, so long as we live in this world, we cannot avoid being involved in many and divers matters, such, for instance, as the dis-

posal of property, anxiety as to how things ought to be done, or, in fact, the handling of anything relating to outward business, yet we ought to exercise great diligence and care that they do not reach the higher part of the soul.

Let indeed Martha remain in the lower place, let her be careful and troubled about many things, if needs be : but to the one thing which alone is needful, let Mary cleave : let her keep leisure for the Eternal Word, for Justice, Wisdom, Truth, so that in one and the same person, both lives, each in its own place, may be exercised and become perfect.

CHAPTER XIX

That a life spent in the presence of God is the only good life : that it is endowed with truth and wisdom, and that it reacheth forth to all things in righteousness and peace.

I AM straitened on every side, and I meet with conflicts and troubles unless with great diligence and care I often exercise myself inwardly in the presence of God, to be with Whom is my highest good and to be without Whom my greatest ill.

And if I persevere I may be able, at least sometimes, in light to see light, namely, that Wisdom in which all things are esteemed for what they are, and that simple Truth as it is in itself and in which I may be able to see the truth concerning all things, and chiefly con-

cerning myself. From this it is plain that I am purely and simply nothing, and that what is in me of myself is nothing, except that which, if truth were told, should be despised and spurned by every creature.

And thus, placed as it were wholly outside myself, and observing myself from afar and despising myself, I will go forth along with the bare truth of all things that exist, on high and in the depth, far and wide, after the manner in which truth itself goeth forth towards all things, looking upon all that is contrary with a quiet mind, and upon all that is turbulent in great calm.

CHAPTER XX

A prayer to Christ for the abiding illumination of His countenance and for true liberty of spirit: with the answer of our Lord.

O THOU Truth unchangeable, Light of mine eyes, Eternal Wisdom, Righteousness and Peace, O all my good, my strength and my praise: along with Thee do I run in freedom, and without Thee I am exceeding constrained on every side. I, a little child, a poor little one, Thy servant, useless within and without, the least in my Father's house, on the bended knees of my heart and my body salute Thee from afar, for my purity is not great enough for me to be firmly fastened to Thee. Take away the veil, cleanse my countenance, that I may

clearly behold Thee : and that when the darkness of my heart has been put to flight, my soul may rejoice and exult in Thy divine light, run quickly on its way and with sweet delight may praise and exalt Thee.

And who will be able to follow Thee, Lord Jesu, whithersoever Thou goest ? Who of all men will be able to follow after the Eternal Wisdom which reacheth from one end to another mightily, and sweetly ordereth all things ?

And behold, as I stand in Thy presence, the tears of my heart and of my body stream forth to Thee because it is scarce ever granted to me even for a little while to be able to follow Thee, so bound and fettered am I by my own self. Wilt Thou in this matter restrain Thyself and not rather visit me with the arm of Thy might and have pity upon me in the claims and hindrances which bind and fetter me, so that I may be restored to my former place close to Thee and may no longer belong to anyone else or even to myself, but may be wholly Thine ?

" So far wilt thou be able to follow Me," saith the Truth, " as thou withdrawest from thyself. Do, therefore, whatever thou canst, thine outward difficulties will not vanish, thine inward troubles will not be quieted, until thou altogether leave thyself and art wholly changed into Me."

What, thinkest thou, is the reason why the voice of the turtle-dove is not more often heard in our land of the living ? Perchance because thou art not a true solitary turtle-dove, and

hast still a mate and a lover in the land of the sorrowing: the voice of the true and chaste turtle-dove, whose voice is sweet and whose form is fair, is often heard in our land."

CHAPTER XXI

To him who is naught in himself, God is all in all.

MOST gladly will I glory in my infirmities and in my poverty, namely, that of myself I am nothing, that the very power and strength and true riches of Christ may dwell in me. I despair altogether of myself,[1] no confidence or strength remaineth in me, and nothing is due to me but every kind of evil, trouble and distress. And I do not desire to be anything, that Thou the Highest Good mayest be all and that my entire glorying may be in Thee and no cause for boasting in myself. For I am a poor straying and lost little sheep, or as a silly dove without a heart, as a reed shaken with the wind, a vineyard laid waste that bringeth forth thorns and brambles; I am wretched and miserable, full of darkness and obscurity, greatly subject to vanity and changeableness, lightly swayed hither and thither. And if there is aught of good or virtue or equity or justice, of truth or peace in me, it is because Thou Thyself art indeed goodness itself, virtue, equity, truth

[1] That is, of my own power.

and all the rest, and therefore Thou art all and I am wholly naught.

And as a piece of iron when completely heated may say, "I burn indeed, but from the fire which is in me, not that I am myself fire," and as the candle may say, "It is true that I shine, but with the light which is in me, not that I am myself light," and as any tool fitted for the work may say, "I work, but by the hand of the workman": so with the soul: it is said to burn, not of itself, but from the love that is in it; it is said to shine, not of itself, but from the light of wisdom and truth which is in it; it is said to work, but it is God Who worketh all things in it.

And should these qualities, that is to say, love, wisdom, light, depart from the soul, it will remain cold and in darkness: and as an instrument, however suitable it may be, lieth altogether useless and without producing anything unless the hand of the workman laboureth by means of it, so the soul, though it may have been created noble, clever and intelligent, will nevertheless remain altogether empty and fruitless unless God work all its works in it.

CHAPTER XXII

That by true resignation true rest is to be obtained, and also the true wisdom which sufficeth for all things.

SINCE events take place in wonderful variety, and various happenings, which could not be

foreseen, occur so unexpectedly, and those things the anticipation of which made the soul very anxious often do not happen at all ; therefore in this wretched life there is nothing better and more restful and more pleasing to God than in all things to be without care for oneself, despising whatever by failure or wrong may be found tending to one's own convenience, and with a free heart to suffer our Lord to work out our salvation, whether by convenience or inconvenience, by consolation or desolation, by death or by life, by darkness or by light, in whatsoever way it shall please Him.

And thus let a man receive from the hand of the Lord whatever may happen to him, as being the best thing that can come to pass, and let him continually resign himself wholly to the Lord. Thus he will not be over-anxious about daily events, whether they happen in this way or that, for in themselves they are neither good nor bad, and in the very depth of his being he will feel neither an attraction to the one nor disinclination for the other, but just as the aforenamed things turn out, so do they please him well, so far, that is, as regards the inner depth of his being, because he is content with what is ordained by God.

But in respect of those things which may be possessed by both good and wicked in common, let him in nowise follow an attraction to a thing desirable in itself or encourage aversion from what is contemptible, except so far as it may serve to his own progress.

And so let him form the habit of establishing

and settling himself firmly in the one highest, eternal and changeless Good, which cannot be moved by circumstances, and which will never leave him though he be forsaken by all, but however hopeless things may be, as a true friend will remain faithful to him. With the highest Good he will be steadfast, walking always earnestly and sincerely before the Face of God, day and night in truth and wisdom. In this wisdom he will be established and he will not be turned aside, for it will go down with him into the pit and will not leave him in bonds, but will shew unto him the simple truth in regard to doubtful things. In this wisdom he will look upon all things (in his own measure) according as that one highest and changeless Good in which he is established understandeth now and did understand them when by His own eternal Wisdom He made all things.

And this Wisdom will be unto him a companion on a journey, and at home, in every place and at all times, an unfailing light in darkness, a pleasant friend with whom to converse, an exceeding delightful guest in time of silence and of leisure, and an inward unction that sootheth every trouble.

Supported by the friendship of this companion he will need no other, but will be inwardly rich in all things, because he possesseth that in which all things have their being.

And since he is destitute of all worldly comfort and consolation, and because he hath counted all things as naught, with this companion he will be inwardly as liberal and bountiful in

his poverty as if he were lord of the whole world.

He may be clothed in sackcloth, covered with ashes, deprived of the light of day; he may be the last of all, may be despised by every one, may lie hidden in a corner of the house and be burdened with many inconveniences: or, on the contrary, he may be held in honour and reverence, and exterior things may be, from circumstances, quite different from those aforenamed: yet neither one nor the other state affects him, for whatever his desire may be, in this Wisdom he hath possession of it, and neither adversity or trouble lessens its fulness.

This, then, is the straight path of the elect of God, the path of Truth and Wisdom, and they who bravely abide in it under all circumstances reach happily their desired end, and when the time of their departure from this world cometh, the evil spirit will be able to find in them but little or nothing of his own.

CHAPTER XXIII

The man who is poor in spirit is indeed truly and spiritually very rich, because by contemplation and the knowledge of God he comes to possess true liberty of soul.

A CERTAIN person, truly poor in spirit and strengthened by our Lord, speaking of the higher part of his soul, saith thus: Behold I am rich and abound, for I already possess all that I

desire of this world, and that which I have, I hold as if I had it not, because I do not possess it with affection, and I can even be in want of it without feeling any harm.

That very highest, bare, formless and unchangeable Truth abideth in the highest part of my spirit and sheweth unto me its ineffable riches, which cannot be compared with anything at all: namely, the one simple Word, in Whom all things are contained, and beyond Him I seek for naught.

My own nothingness is there displayed to me, and the nothingness of myself in the degree in which I am myself, all the low things which might draw my mind to one side or the other, and moreover, there is shewn me the true being of all things. And it is not from beneath that I look upon the lower sort of events and circumstances according to the changing senses, but I look at all things from above, and on my behalf the Truth crieth out with a terrible voice to all strange things that are not one with it: "Come not hither, for the place whereon he standeth is holy ground."

And thus very often doth He shew His Face to me, one while in choir, one while on my couch, now at table, now in my cell, in outward disturbances, at work, in various employments, and He teacheth me always to simplify within all things that are without and to change them into one strong interior gaze. And so powerful is His face [1] that it mightily subdueth the heart and the body, so that not only the

[1] The interior look holdeth the whole man in its power.

foundations,[1] but also the very hinges, as it were, of the temple of the Lord are moved to respond and agree with It, to follow quickly whithersoever He goeth, to follow with its whole strength the light shewn to it, and to offer up without any interruption, all that it is, and may become, together with every created thing, in time and in eternity.

And when this happens it would be a great consolation to me, and a relief to my heart, if even in the body I could bow myself down beneath all created things, and could disparage, humiliate and despise myself. And He bringeth me very near to a mere nothing, so far as regards myself and my sins, that is, He sheweth how all things that are not united in Him are nothing. And after I have thus been brought to naught He taketh up my own spontaneous look and setteth His seal upon it and uniteth it forthwith with His own look, so that His look and mine are one clear look, not as it were one reflected from every side, but that in it and with it I in my measure behold all things that are or can be, even as His own countenance beholds them.

And, as a consequence, I am rendered careless about myself, and am comforted concerning all that can happen to me: and I give leave to all things to happen, namely, whatsoever is allowed to come upon me by the changeless truth and the everlasting ordering of my Lord, to Whom I have resigned my life, my death, all that I am

[1] That is, not only the lower part, but the higher part also is moved by the power of God.

or may be in time or eternity, yet not rashly presuming or choosing aught for my own convenience.

CHAPTER XXIV

That in a spiritual man who contemplates divine Truth there is wonderful power of rising above all things by reason, and also humility and evenness of mind.

" LET all things be to thee, even as they are to Me, mere creatures " : thus saith the Truth itself. And so whatsoever cometh to mind concerning all the things which the human soul can long after, save God only, even in those things that outwardly seem to be holy, and which if a man possessed he would not on that account be more holy or blessed, nor if he possessed them not would he be less holy or blessed : these things do not incite my desires any more than would dry wood or the flower which is trodden under foot, for all these things have withered in my heart.

And on the other hand I can with free and humble heart bear those things that sensuality fleeth, and avoideth whenever possible, so that on either side all things are pierced through by one simple and bare gaze.

I heartily reverence all men as the throne of the glory of the Holy Trinity, and each single person I regard as one who will be infinitely higher than I in future bliss : although I am not worthy even to be the least nor to assume any such thing concerning myself.

Thus I reverence all, but I have no dread of anyone so as to be inwardly oppressed because perchance he is powerful and hard, or because I shall have to suffer this or that from him.

For what if I am oppressed, tried, contemned and despised with no fault of my own; if I am the least of all or the least esteemed at home, uncared for, cast aside as a useless vessel all the days of my exile, or if I am anything else that self-love might dread? Shall such things or any other like them be able to reach up to me where on high I act, or rather [1] am acted upon, suffering the divine action [2]; where I desire nothing different from what is and fear naught? Before the face and in the presence of the changeless Truth let me rise in heart above every outward exaltation, and in affection let me sink beneath every humiliation which can be brought upon me by men, however greatly troubles and inconveniences may abound.

Therefore you and no others do I call blessed and glorious, you who are thus raised above every desire and are thus in a willing heart abased beneath everything that depresseth, wheresoever or whosoever ye may be, whether necessity hath placed you in honour and dignity or hath left you despised and forlorn.

For in this respect I do not take account of raiment, nor stature, nor position, nor rank, nor good health of body, nor outward show, nor any exterior matters, however important they

[1] As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Rom. viii. 14.

[2] That is, the action of God upon me.

may seem, for our Lord hath no special regard for these things, and indeed they are not to be held in great esteem.

Nor is it any great care to me how I fare in outward matters, whether, namely, I am clothed in sackcloth or in fine clothes, whether I live in a corner of the house or elsewhere, whether I be despised or honoured, whether others be preferred before me or not: for none of these things, in whatever way they may happen, can affect me.

For if a man be disturbed by such outward things, and if he wavers between what is to be accepted and what is to be avoided, truly his spiritual conversation is still small and slender, and the state of his mind weak and near collapse.

And it is indeed exceeding unworthy in the sight of our Lord that a soul so noble, and in itself so open to the influence of the Highest Good, should care about such base and worthless things.

CHAPTER XXV

Of the double region within us, namely, the lower, which belongeth to the bodily senses, and the higher, which belongeth to the soul and spirit. Whosoever withdraweth himself from the region of the senses to the region of the spirit, and walketh before God in the spirit, is secure, and cannot be touched or injured by things of sense. Thence it appears what it is to walk according to the Spirit.

THE lower region, that is, the region of the senses, is full of unrest, disturbance and conflict,

and therefore one ought, with all one's strength, to hasten on to the higher region and condition of soul.

When, then, we shall be in very truth masters of ourselves, our footsteps will not be hampered, but boldly and freely shall we walk with the Lord, looking at all things along with Him.

And in company with Him shall we go forth to all things that are and are done, and thence shall we return unto Him the self-same, in all things being at peace and at rest in God, even though the lower region with its powers be disturbed by many adversities and movements according to the passions and inclinations of each one. For however great our progress, nature must remain nature.

But those natural movements do not belong to the higher state of soul, and if this prevail it will not be subdued or forced by nature.

We may indeed enjoy divers consolations, and these not even of a bad kind, or sensible devotions,[1] and yet remain imperfect and unstable, and without being inwardly grounded in the knowledge of love, of truth and of justice.

And so all our days we roam about, desiring indeed to go forward and to arrive speedily at a perfect state of soul, but yet we do not see the inward way by which we must go, by reason of those outward things in which we find our satisfaction, and so we make no farther progress.

But the path by which we reach directly to the Highest Good, to our first Beginning, to the

[1] That is, so as to rest in them.

peace of God, is this: that we love the Cross of our Lord by following His footsteps, that we do not place our peace and quietude too much in outward things or in sensible devotions, and that we pass our days without choosing our own convenience and without avoiding what is inconvenient.

For as long as we are content with our own ease and our own convenience we shall be troubled, and we shall be swayed hither and thither according to what happeneth to us from without. Therefore it behoveth us continually to recall our mind from outward to inward things, and there will be shewn to us the path by which we may reach the highest peace. Outward shewing of the way is of little use unless by an inward keen gaze we learn by experience by which way we ought to go.

And this is the reason we remain dry and in darkness without the illumination of truth, namely, that we have not come to that very inner essence of things, on account of which all external things exist and are made, even those things that are mystical and spiritual.

However much we seem to have made progress outwardly in spiritual good things and appearances, or in a reputation for sanctity, all is empty and little, unless the interior man be reformed and conformed to God: but if it be conformed, then gladly will we forego whatever other outward things and consideration God shall see fit to withhold, for they are not necessary to us.

For all the exterior things belonging to us

will be sanctified and made acceptable to our Lord in so far as and for the very reason that in our inmost being we are blessed and holy, for outward things do not of themselves make us holy, and although all things ought to be done " decently and in order," nevertheless we must not rest in such matters.

Often by them we are hindered from making real progress, because we stay and rest in them, instead of pressing through them to true and perfect holiness.

It is impossible that we should become really inwardly spiritual, so long as we are content with things only outwardly and apparently good, lingering in them and not passing beyond them. Indeed, unless from the bottom of our hearts we deny ourselves, the Spirit of Truth will not come to us—the Spirit Who will teach us all truth, and Who will grant us to walk inwardly always before the Lord, and Who will make our whole inner being to respond to Him. And " wherefore do we spend money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not ? " Why do we not rather buy at a small cost all fulness, satiety and all that can be desired ? For unless we give away what we love and possess, we shall not have what we desire.

Hence it is that we are cast down in grief and are straitened in ourselves and are poured out in useless affections: and hence also aversions : hence it is that those things that by the ordering of our Lord happen to us from without fail to please us : hence also such great

fickleness, interior disturbances, even where they are most unfitting [1]: hence also it follows that cares and occupations take possession of us because we are inwardly without power, and so while we are suffering in misery they are effectually working.

All these things come upon us because our conversation is from without, and we look at what is really beneath us, from below, and not from above.[2]

"Who is he that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him come to our Lord, the Light that never faileth, and let him stay upon Him." Where is He? saith he. "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart," in thy senses, within thee, without thee, above thee, beneath thee, around thee on every side. Whithersoever thou goest, the Word, namely, simple and single, the Bridegroom, the Word which is often present to fervent hearts, and often sheweth unto them every good, namely, Wisdom, Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Eternal Light lightening every one that cometh to Him. What now remaineth, but to open our eyes and see and understand the coming of our Lord to us, and to stand upon our watch, awaiting Him?

God therefore cometh unto us by a means, that is, by grace, as by Wisdom, Truth, Righteousness and the rest. If now we love God and are in grace, "all things work together for good" to us, without acceptance of one or

[1] That is, in holy exercises of prayer.
[2] *I.e.* through the senses and not by the spirit.

another, even in those events which seem to have happened for our undoing.

Our very passions and natural inclinations, and all things which seem to us to be hindrances, bring us no little profit, if only we be watchful.[1] For when a soul is attacked by such things, forthwith they force her to run back to our Lord, to her own inner being, and to that higher region within, where they cannot reach her. And where her own courage and fortitude fail, there she seeketh true fortitude and is humbled by experiencing her own weakness.

Our Lord Who hath so exceedingly loved us from everlasting and hath shewn us such great proofs of love, and above all hath given us His whole self, how could He suffer aught to come upon us, save for our profit and for His love ?

And if, perchance, by reason of our fault, He alloweth something to come and then leaveth us ? Well ; we shall then feel this, that we have deserved infinitely worse, and we will gladly bear whatsoever shall seem good unto Him.

Thus ought we in divers ways to reach forward to our Lord according as various things happen to us, and in all things to have grace, and in every tribulation and trouble to say with the prophet Jeremiah, " Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it "[2] (Vulg. : Truly this is mine own infirmity, and I will bear it). He who is diligent in grace and payeth heed to it, understandeth

[1] He is watchful who does not consent to ill-doing.
[2] Jer. x. 19.

how our Lord ordereth all things for our profit: and he will possess as much in the least as in the greatest, as much in darkness as in light; and he will bring darkness into light and turn want into abundance. For grace is, as it were, a ring or a circle, having neither beginning nor end: for it worketh and proceedeth from God to all creatures, and from creatures again it turneth back without break to its source. When, therefore, in our highest faculties we are united with our Lord, we go forth through His grace towards all things along with Him. For what He alloweth, we allow, what He giveth, we give, walking in a certain way independent of the bodily senses.

And in company with Him we endure whatever happens to us, whether the cause be outward or inward things, contempt, infirmities, passions and such like: as though a man were to say in his necessity, "This hath been so ordained from all eternity, thus it ought to happen, and so I will it to happen and I choose no otherwise. Our Lord hath given me infirmities, dryness, passions and darkness: in these I will to train myself as though I had warm feeling in my heart towards God and I seek fruit from them: for out of His great love our Lord hath ordained that these things should come upon me, as a means of growth and an opportunity for forwarding my eternal salvation." There, then, shall our light rise in darkness and our darkness shall be as the noonday. There we shall possess God and God will possess us in that most obscure knowledge in which

all things that can come to us from without shall be unable to touch us. There are we hidden in the secret of the presence of the Lord. Thanks be to God Almighty, that no one seeth us there! Thanks be to God, that to the eye of flesh nothing appeareth but every infirmity, lest, if our hidden strength were seen it should be taken away. According to this union we ought to look at all things, not according to ourselves, but striving ever more and more to come out of ourselves.

And let no one consider us straitened, needy, wretched, without honour, because perchance all external solace is withdrawn from us, because, that is to say, no one seeketh us, no one asketh after us, because we are cast out, oppressed, considered as naught: because we despise ourselves, choosing rather to be poor and in a certain sense the offscouring of all things.

The Lord liveth, before Whom we walk in sincerity and truth, and therefore not one of all those things that are lacking is really necessary for us: for we require nothing else than that supreme Good in which we have all things. All other things beside that are to us exceeding small and puny: and if He wills not to give them, we can and will be gladly without them, for they are but superfluities.

But if nature is disturbed, oppressed and rather unwillingly suffereth inconveniences and contrary things, or is disquieted at not having her own will, that is nothing to us: only let her remain beneath, lest she involve the soul likewise in disquietude.

And for this reason it is that the unction which cometh from above and falleth down upon the beard (namely, upon the higher powers of the soul) at times also reacheth down to the skirts of the clothing, that is to say, in warmth of feeling, and on all the bodily senses, so that even these for the time desire nothing else but that the will of the Lord be done as in heaven so on this earth of ours, and then their murmurings and impatience cease, and they can bear inconveniences and troubles more easily.

If thus we follow on after the grace of God, not turning away[1] outside it, we shall always be in the light, and if not in light in the senses and affections, yet at least in that Light in which we seek and desire no other thing than that which our Lord shall be pleased to give, whether it be darkness or light.

CHAPTER XXVI

How strictly God will require the reformation of our interior as well as of our exterior being, according to His own Image and good pleasure.

WITHOUT ceasing I will strive to be inwardly renewed before the Face of the Lord Who looketh at all my inner being and the very ground of my intention in the light of His own most just and irreversible judgement

[1] To abide in grace is to cleave in spirit to God.

And He looketh on everything that moveth me or draweth me, to see whether I reckon as something that which is naught to Him.[1]

And so with great strictness doth He require the conformity of my whole inner being with His own image, and of my outward bearing with His own conversation upon earth: so that He may claim for Himself not only a part, but the whole of my undivided being.

Since it is He Who hath wholly made me, wholly renewed me, He also willeth that the throne of His glory[2] should not be moved or disquieted for any cause whatever, for He judgeth that nothing in the whole world could be worthy or powerful enough to oppress or destroy the temple of His truth.

And He also willeth that we have leisure for Him and keep solemn festival with Him, exercising great command over ourselves and over all things that might disturb us.

And He desireth also that we be joined with Him and enjoy Him as though we were placed wholly outside ourselves: esteeming ourselves unimportant, despising and bringing ourselves utterly to naught, caring nothing whatever what may happen to us from without or within, so that all our freedom and security may have no other origin than a deep humility, denial of self and conformity with the everlasting and

[1] That is, God looketh upon me to see whether there be in me any affection for anything for which He Himself hath no affection.

[2] The soul of man is the throne of God.

changeless Truth and Wisdom, which should wholly possess all our outward and inward powers, using them as living instruments, working of their own free will.

And he desireth also that beyond and through all things we should often gaze at the Face of Wisdom, of Truth, of Justice and of the Peace of God, that is to say, after the measure of our littleness, and in order that we may free ourselves from all things, however turbulently they may happen. For however many troubles and hindrances there may be on all sides, yet there remaineth always a glorious path very wide and straight[1] which passeth through the midst of all tribulations.

In this path we learn to rise above all hindrances, not by turning aside or by fleeing from them: but by a full, spiritual, strengthened gaze, while we remain in all things at rest with the very changeless Truth.

We are taught also to look kindly upon the astonishment, the grave or foolish displeasure of every other person, and if we cannot correct him calmly, then to endure it, as being ourselves established in a safe place and secretly guarded, out of the reach of all such troubles.

[1] By introversion the spirit remains raised aloft in God, and passes through all hindering things.

CHAPTER XXVII

That the desire of God is to find joy in us: that our desire is to enjoy God and to take delight in His working in ourselves.

WHO can worthily ponder on the way in which our Lord without ceasing regardeth and considereth His own eternal Image in us, an image which can never be blotted out, and who can know how He beholdeth and recognizeth Himself in us, as though, so far as may be, we could receive Him whole and undivided? For He enjoyeth Himself in us and we enjoy Him in Himself and in ourselves. He also requireth strict conformity to that likeness after which we were created, since He is exceeding zealous on our behalf. Shall not the Lord of Glory be zealous for His temple and for the throne of His glory? It is for this that He now and again taketh all our powers, not only the higher, but at times also the lower, and uniteth them to Himself, making them unable to act, so that there may be no opposition to Him, but that He Himself may take complete possession of us, and that we may have leisure for Him and allow Him to act on us.

Blessed is he who thus alloweth the divine working in himself.

Who will grant me often to undergo this blessed suffering, by which I may forget myself and all things, and nothing may enter into me and be sweet unto me but the Word, the Bridegroom, Who then inwardly and outwardly possesseth my whole being?

CHAPTER XXVIII

The heritage in this life of the truly poor in spirit.

MY heritage in this life neither is, nor shall be any other, nor will I consider anything else of value, than to be hidden and abject, the last of all; so that no one may seek after me nor enquire after me nor have any care for me, being as I am of no account, of no consideration, poor and only to be despised.

Therefore with all my might, by day and by night, without and within, I will be watchful to reach out after these and other like desirable things; so that when they come near I may receive them as gifts already long desired.

And so I will leave great things to the great, the learned, the famous: I have no knowledge of such: and I will gladly be content with little things and with the least, as being myself of no value. The Face of the Bridegroom alone sufficeth me.

CHAPTER XXIX

The excellence and sweetness of Poverty, of the Cross and of the yoke of Christ: the wonderful divine and wholesome fruits they produce in the soul devoted to them.

O HOW glorious is the poverty of our Lord Jesus and of all His chosen ones! With what praises to extol Thee I know not. All riches,

glory, honour, praise and abundance are in Thee.

Though we be spiritual, interior, quick-witted and ingenious: though we be skilful and able from heavenly and hidden mysteries to bring forth deep truths and yet be not drawn to the poverty and simplicity of our Lord Jesus, our power of edifying will be but little or nothing, for interior things are not seen nor do they edify. To be drawn to poverty, therefore, is to shew forth humility, simplicity and abjection in and through all things, wherever there may be reason for it; and always to choose the simpler things, those of least worth and the lowest; to take only the really needful in temporary things, and that unwillingly; to embrace the Cross, things burdensome, labours and whatever is commonly eschewed: and so to live as if all our movements, behaviour and works were proclaiming, our "kingdom is not of this world."

These are the qualities and others like them which sanctify us, edify those who are looking on, and which have kept religion steadfast and still preserve it. For our Lord Jesus hath left us His Cross to carry, not soft things or sweet, not comforts, not empty human praise, but every kind of trouble, suffering, inconvenience, wretchedness, separation from pleasures of sense, so that as long as we live we may be as those who have nothing in common with this world.

O how sweet is this yoke of Christ! To thee who hast freely and heartily submitted to

it, all things are light and easy. For the reason why disturbances, heaviness and dryness are within us and come to us, is that we seek to flee from and to escape the cross and the yoke, and do not lovingly submit ourselves. When, therefore, the Cross and the yoke of our Lord are sweet to us, and we feel drawn to them, and when humiliations, littleness and poverty are refreshing, then we shall very quickly pass beyond all hindrances, and then we shall consider reproach a joy, humiliation to be exaltation, and want to be abundance. Then shall we be, as it were, " daily dying, and behold we live," as cast down and without honour, and yet full of honour, as of no reputation and the scorn of men, of no account or consideration, as afflicted and tormented, and behold we shall be as those " of whom the world was not worthy " ; we shall be in despair, and hopeless, and behold our hope will be exceeding great, and our security will be within, where no one from without will see us, nor be able to reach us, where we shall dwell with our Lord, armed on every side with the shield of truth and equity, and not bound and hemmed in to no purpose : if it were otherwise our shame would be great when we came to stand before our Lord, both now and hereafter.

Being such as this, we neither know, nor have we known, any man or any thing according to mere affection or the attraction of the senses : for when we look upon heaven and earth and all things that are in them or are made, we are not corrupted by the love of any nor are we

straitened by fear: and this is because the Word of God Himself, the highest, eternal, unchangeable truth, wisdom and righteousness, keeping guard over our mind, putteth darkness to flight, enlighteneth the understanding and so uniteth it, that in its simple gaze there is no retrogression or reflection: and in the meeting and embrace between His Face and ours (in a certain way) there is nothing that interveneth. And in this meeting, it is through Him that we see Himself and all things, and in it also He enjoyeth and seeth Himself through us, where He Himself is the very sight, both He Who is seen and He Who seeth.

And so it happens that our understanding, being enlightened and seeing all things in wisdom and in truth, by no means alloweth our memory or our simple introverted reflection to be in any way obscured by objects, and in consequence neither the will nor the affections are suffered to be disquieted by strange attractions.

And where we thus present before our Lord His own pure and undefined image, there we cease working, and nothing of our own remains to us. And there He maketh us to be love from love, truth from truth, wisdom from wisdom, and all good from Himself. There we are born sons of adoption, taken up in the only-begotten Son by the Father, to Whom outwardly and inwardly, according to the measure of our littleness, we are made conformable.

CHAPTER XXX

That the embrace of the Word, the Divine Spouse of our soul, and the turning of our face to His Face worketh great and marvellous things in us, if we keep our eye single and our intention pure. How wonderfully all vain and troublous things are overcome and dispersed by the manifestation of the Wisdom of God, His Countenance supplying what is lacking, enlightening, ruling, perfecting all things.

"LET Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth,"[1] saith the soul that is wounded with love. A great desire, and an experience beyond the power of man to measure. But because "love taketh no comfort in things that have no power"[2]—that is, in things that perish, therefore whatever besides this may be gathered round about us, we consider very small and narrow, and able neither to set our desire at rest nor to satisfy it. When, therefore, the eternal Wisdom or the changeless Truth sheweth unto us His Face, His incomparable riches, all beauty and all that can be desired, and makes us understand that the man who seeth His face desireth nothing more, then our interior face striveth with such eager love to be pressed to His Face in an inward, chaste and fervent kiss and embrace, as if it ought to pass wholly into it and be transformed, and in a certain way itself to become what that Face of His is in itself.

There the eternal Father begetteth unceas-

[1] Cant. i. 1.

[2] See Sermon of St Peter Chrysologus, *On the Incarnation* (No. 147).

ingly His only simple Word in Whom we know and behold all things, by Whom we learn to simplify and unify all our multiplicities, our employments and all our outward acts, looking upon Him beyond and through all our works, however great and divine they may seem to be, and in Whom alone we shall rest and be made stable, and by a mutual regard become one with Him.

There eye is against eye, face against face: there is the Face of the Bridegroom, and there is ours, but the unlikeness is not small, concerning which, however, for the present we say nothing: there our created life looketh upon and visiteth our uncreated life, which is from everlasting in God and one with Him.

Thence we are made as humble and as little in ourselves before the Face of the Lord as a child one moment old, nor can we bring ourselves to naught sufficiently to satisfy our desire.

This making little of ourselves and bringing ourselves to naught makes us as generous and free, as safe and abounding, as if we had need of no other person. And from it we gain in all our thoughts, movements and works, a simple eye and intention, which looketh upon every object with gravity and caution, as if to say to each, "I see what thou art, and what is in thee, what thou purposest, whence thou comest and whither thou goest, and that thou carest for me, according to thine own capacity and in no other way.

And on this account our progress in following

our Lord is free and swift, so too our following of wisdom and truth, of the Bridegroom whithersoever He goeth, after the measure of our littleness, since we are not hindered by weakness arising from other causes, nor in this respect do we take cognizance of anything whether in heaven above or on earth beneath; whatever disturbeth us disquieteth and dimmeth our interior eye, although it may seem outwardly to be only a holy affection, yet is it altogether harmful and unworthy, separating us from true union with the highest good and creating a hindrance and veil between God and our enlightened reason; and therefore it will need a burning and fiery purifying in us: therefore in all that happeneth to us within or without, above all things a simple eye and pure intention are necessary for us: a simple eye, which will fully examine what each thing is according to straight truth, and which discerneth between precious and the vile; a pure intention to follow after the simple eye, seeing the truth of all things, which maketh us altogether empty of all "propriety" and consoleth us in all things that can come upon us. This pure intention causeth us to do all things that are truly virtuous before God and man with a free and unfettered heart, and also everything that we do inwardly and outwardly without any other regard or purpose. By this purity of intention we are delivered from all vain scrupulosity and anxiety, from the fear of hell and of the devil, from dread of divers happenings, or of wicked men, and of varying moods, however pressing

they may be from without: in short, we are freed from everything that can straiten us. By this we are led on upon the broad paths of wisdom and equity, and we confidently say: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." By this we trustfully make our approach unto the Lord and stand before Him without shame. For thence it is that our speech is forceful and insistent, and pleasant the colloquy between ourselves and the King, the Lord of Hosts, we ourselves being sacrificial victims and a holy oblation.

And in consequence the whole world and all that belongeth to it becomes vile to us, and the consideration of earthly things and unnecessary business has no importance for us, for why should we turn aside from the face of wisdom and towards foolishness and falsehood; for such is all that is not truth or wisdom or therein contained. Then there is fulfilled that word of Solomon: "The King that sitteth in the throne of judgement scattereth away all evil with his eyes," for the soul united with the simple truth, wisdom and equity which abide in its higher region as on a throne of judgement above every hindrance and all created life, and being made one simple look with truth, wisdom and equity, scattereth and bringeth to naught by one strong gaze every evil, every unlikeness, every veil and barrier between itself and the Lord: or rather all these things are scattered by the look of God, by Himself, as the stern and just judge of all things that can trouble and dis-

turb us, and Who placeth before them a boundary which they shall not pass, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." Thus every contrary thing being scattered and broken, the voice of the chaste turtle-dove still abiding in the land of the sorrowing is often heard in the land of the living; for every movement of one who thus converseth before the Face of the Lord, his behaviour, his thoughts, his inward and outward conversation are powerful voices in the presence of the Lord, and even when he is sleeping, his innocence, purity, equity, modesty and other proofs of love cease not to make their voices heard in the ears of the Bridegroom.

Many daughters have gathered together riches, honours, glory, consolations and the rest, whatever there may be that pleaseth, but this one hath excelled them all, counting all else but little and contemptible. The Face and Kiss of the Bridegroom are enough for her, for in Him she hath all things and she needeth nothing further. If none of those outward things which are desired and sought after by others accrue to her, her glory and fulness will not be any less; if all things be added to her, they will not increase her glory: therefore she is able to do without all things and suffer no loss.

Let others, then, seek whatever they will, one this and another that; let them covet and acquire, be stirred and moved, be inwardly taken up with all kinds of strange things; these she counts of no great value, considers nothing precious, nothing glorious, nothing

pleasant but the Face of the Lord and the Kiss of the Bridegroom : all the rest is mean in her eyes and withered. For she is one of the chaste virgins and pure brides of the Bridegroom, who, unblemished and unspoiled by any living creature, not helpless or weak or hindered, but according to her own measure, followeth the Bridegroom whithersoever He goeth : since she hath a true understanding of all things that are, and a simple knowledge of the truth, and she considereth that a thing moveth in no other way but that in which the truth judgeth that it should be moved.

And on the right hand and on the left she is well established in all that happeneth, so that to her the Bridegroom is both life and living, and her inward being becomes like unto Him by Whom and after Whose image it hath been made. For all her outward conversation is, so to speak, a form composed of interior virtues, an image, as it were, of a perfect soul, and reformed, as becometh a chaste spouse : so that there is nothing in her inner being to soil or corrupt her true virginity and integrity, nothing outward in word, look or behaviour unworthy or immodest, in short, nothing unbecoming in any movement : were it otherwise, in no respect could she be called chaste, but rather an adulteress, should she be held back by anything whatsoever, unless she quickly repented, or should she inwardly frame strange images by which she might be drawn away from God. How greatly these abound in the soul none knoweth but he who hath already been almost

wholly set free from them. But because beneath in the lower region of her being she is moved and blown about hither and thither, it is needful for her at times to raise herself up from the noise and multiplicity and from all the things with which she might come into conflict, and place herself in the place where not only doth she see nothing to be desired, nothing which reproacheth or wearieth her, but where all her powers are keenly intent upon the one highest good, namely, the Bridegroom, where she findeth neither time nor place nor state nor habit, nor any kind of conflict, but a certain pure existence, into which no accidents can come. Here she beholdeth all good, the breadth of charity and truth, and the beauty of righteousness, the most straight line of equity to which she often referreth all her interior and exterior, the root and ground of her intention in all her movements, and comparing all, findeth out what are like and what are unlike one another.

There she heareth the Lord Himself saying to her that all the things which she seeth, which she feeleth and which in part she enjoyeth, are all her own and that she will enjoy them eternally, that she will be transformed into them, if she remain faithful and chaste : that is to say, that by His grace she may be good in herself, goodness in Him : true, peaceful, wise, virtuous, just and blessed in herself : in Him truth, peace, wisdom, virtue, equity and beatitude, since being partakers of the divine nature we are as gods.

A soul of this kind, abounding in so many lilies, is not unworthy to invite the Bridegroom to come into her garden of nuts to look at the fruits of the valleys, to see if the vines flourish, to come also into the field and to the bed of flowers, to her clean heart, to her couch adorned, to the bed of spices, that He may feed in the gardens and gather lilies, where the Bridegroom is Himself her lilies, her flowers, her cleanness, her ornaments, her spices. He it is Who feedeth, He Who is fed, and when it is said that the fore-named qualities are in the bride or that she hath a pure heart, it is only meant that she already in a great degree enjoyeth her Bridegroom.

But these things are often repeated, that He Who is already partially present may come more fully, may bless more richly, may more often shew His face which at times He hideth that it may be sought the more eagerly: and that what is now still done at intervals and partially, may at length be perfected according to the heart's longing with unveiled face. What thou hast hitherto done is truly as nothing: it behoves thee to apply an entirely different remedy for the sake of interior conformity, uprightness and equality; otherwise thou wilt fall back into deep darkness, utter unlikeness and wavering.

CHAPTER XXXI

That by solid virtue a man is made firm, unchanging, steadfast and truly free : especially in order that he may be united with the Wisdom of God, whence he seeth all things and judgeth all things as they truly are, and regardeth God alone, all other considerations having been laid aside.

LET every circumstance and event find thee standing firm as a stone that has been squared. Virtue in its essence, which is God, abideth ever the same, full and unchangeable, and it is neither increased nor lessened ; but it is always possible for the virtue which is ours to increase or decrease so long as we live here. And in the sight of our Lord it is so much the more precious and glorious when it has been proved constant under disturbances arising from contrary and divers storms, occupations, tumults and conflicts ; and indeed if it fail in time of tribulation it is clear that in the time of ease and calm it hath not truly taken root in us. That virtue which is preserved through unfavourable and varied incidents is beyond comparison sweeter than that maintained only in times of good fortune and peace.

Virtue in itself never sinks down under adverse circumstances, nor is it moved by them ; and if it unite the soul of a man to itself and make it to be in a certain way all that itself is, then not only doth the soul manfully perform everything that is good, but bravely and in a kindly spirit doth it bear all contrary things, even when, doing all things well, it be nevertheless reproved,

contemned and rejected by others as if it were of no account.

It knoweth how to regard, endure, to weigh and consider all things, like and unlike, tumult and rest, contrarieties and multiplicities—in a word, everything that below God existeth or hath been made, and yet remain firm and fixed, not being easily hindered by anyone, counting all things of little worth, looking on all things with an acute and steady mind, not making it a necessity to avoid or disregard one thing or another, however involved and twisted circumstances may be; but it forceth everything that would draw it in a wrong direction to die and vanish away in that very spot in which it sprang up.

For the hidden manna and the new name which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it, are given to him who bravely overcometh, not to him who falleth out of the battle or maketh pretence to fight.

Whatever is thus accomplished in the soul will be firm and solid, so that no matter what circumstances may drive it about, it will always keep the likeness of a squared stone and will always drop securely into its own square bed. If thus the soul be made perfect within itself, it will be hurt by nothing coming from without, but it will gain from every event. But when it receiveth no consolation apart from God, will it then remain without honour, without comfort? Is it indeed a small honour to possess the knowledge of truth and love and to pursue it, or what is more, by partaking of love

to have become in a certain way Love itself? Is it a small honour to possess conformity of the inner and outer man, to have risen above all things in the world that are not God, to be hindered by the love of no existing thing, by the fear of no one: in short, that it so loveth the Lord its God, that forgetting self, it would wish, if such a thing were possible, to be God, so ardently enkindled is it with love and good-will towards its Lord?

There is yet another matter in which, when it glorieth, it is most free, namely, in its poverty, littleness and abjection, that when in trouble, suffering contempt or bearing punishment it is cared for by no one, and that it desireth to be counted less and lower than all. Though it may be driven by every kind of wind it will not be overturned, for nothing that happens to it will be new or unexpected, and all things have been foreseen, and it awaiteth with an undisturbed mind all that hath been ordained for it from everlasting. For the Eternal Wisdom, more powerful, more sweet, more glorious and richer than all, goeth before it, pointing out unto it a most fair and wide-stretching path. It goeth along with the soul, leading it and nobly strengthening it on the way, and it followeth it, fortifying it on every side in itself and bringing it happily to the end. By means of this Wisdom the soul taketh captive every thought, perception and affection unlike itself: and guided by Wisdom it placeth everything that happeneth there where it may will, and where it should be. To this Wisdom the soul turneth every conflict

and hindrance, that if possible they may meet and engage in battle together. By this Wisdom the soul often gathereth together all its powers, affections, senses both interior and exterior, presenting them whole and entire, not held back in any way by any other power, before the face of God Who changeth not, beyond time and place and every happening, and it placeth itself and all things there where the Eternal Truth placeth them.

And it is not possible for all the world to exalt it, make much of it or honour it to the extent to which it is alone able to despise, contemn and annihilate itself.

On the other hand, from another point of view, in regard to abjection, pusillanimity and scrupulous doubts concerning itself, the whole world cannot cast down, depress or despise it to the degree in which it alone, having a good conscience for its friend, can raise itself up and remain altogether unshaken. The presence of the unchanging truth and equity of God suffereth it not to take delight in any existing thing in any other way than He, Who is at all times present in all His power, judgeth that it should be enjoyed.

Of all things except God Himself, which others may desire, whether honour, dignity, high state or any other thing, it desireth not even so much as may be covered by the eye or held on the point of a needle: for it doth often very eagerly pant in the effort to raise itself above conveniences and inconveniences, sweet things and bitter, above and

beyond all happenings : for since all these things hang equally balanced in his mind, one doth not outweigh the other, and also in whatever way events take place, it seeketh nothing more and longeth after nothing merely for its own convenience. But all these things must perforce remain without, and, as it were, stand dry and useless outside the door, being unable by reason of their weakness to press on into that state where the soul, raised above itself and above all things, enjoyeth union with the Word.

He who is inwardly united to God hath so little care about himself, that were it for the greater honour of God that he should forthwith sink into the lowest hell rather than be in the highest choir of angels, he would not gainsay it inwardly. And what trouble can small and daily circumstances bring to one who, thus set free from care about things eternal, liveth free in heart ?

CHAPTER XXXII

The kiss of the Divine Word and the embrace of the Eternal Wisdom uplift the soul that longeth after the Face of God. The Word of God liveth and worketh in the soul that seeketh Him.

" LET Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." Let the Word, the Bridegroom, unite me to Himself, let Wisdom spring forth unceasingly within me, and I count it of no moment if heaven and earth and all that is therein despise me, for then they have no power

to trouble me. But if He refuse me His kiss, then all the things that are beneath God are powerless to comfort me, for what can all the strange things that happen in the world profit a man? To whatever state he may reach, what doth it profit him if he be not more and more united to our Lord by true inward freedom and purity, and if he be not free from the pressure of earthly things, so that to the eyes of his heart all interior things are as plain and clear as exterior things are to the bodily senses?

He suffereth no small loss if he is not drawn more to poverty, abjection, littleness, so that the whole world becomes a burden to him and despicable, or if he doth not bear himself towards others in a more exemplary, grave and earnest manner; and I reckon as not worth a straw all the other things to which he may attain. But if he do not perceive his loss, "strangers devour his strength and he knoweth it not."[1] Behold he dieth, and in an instant he is called by the Lord; what then shall profit him but a true union in spirit and conformity with Jesus?

And therefore in order that wherever we are, or in whatever state or circumstances we are, we may be ceaselessly renewed, the Countenance of the Word appeareth unto our countenance, and so jealous and strong is He, that He consumeth and bringeth to naught in us whatever pertaineth only to ourselves, and whatever else is in us that is not the Word Himself. And He maketh us so poor and little that we cannot

[1] Hosea vii. 7.

abase ourselves sufficiently, or bend beneath all creatures as we would. And by the presence of His countenance He maketh every other movement to cease and to be at rest: and then He eagerly desireth that our countenance should correspond in the same degree, and be in accord and united with Him, and become partaker of Himself.

Therefore as often as the Eternal Father speaketh or effectively and perceptibly begetteth His own Word in us, the soul and all other things should be silent, and rest from their own workings and remain there where they are and ought to be.

But if it be asked what a man of this character doth in different events and under varying circumstances, whether they be favourable or unfavourable, and whether his mind wavereth according, we answer that he is unmoved, because, with the light of Wisdom as his companion, he hath power readily to lay aside everything, whether it be good or bad, and wheresoever he will.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The soul fully returned to itself triumpheth in all things, and beyond all things it tendeth to the Highest Good, and beholdeth the Face of the Bridegroom, and enjoyeth within himself the Word of the Father, Whom alone he findeth the fulness of all things, whether he be in joy or in want or in suffering.

AFTER the King and Parliament, as it were, have been conquered and the soul set free, it

exulteth in the fire and danceth for joy within a virgin body and heart. For when the darkness of the heart hath been put to flight, and when the thongs that have oppressed and burthened it have been loosed, the soul danceth for joy and exulteth in the light of the unchanging Truth, and this even amidst reproaches, confusion, contempt, tortures, pain and affliction, for the strength of its spirit bears up the feebleness and frailty of nature and transforms every misfortune into the condition of its own tranquillity. Lastly, it forceth the very alterations of circumstances to minister to its own advantage: for never doth it rest in anything that happeneth, good though it may be, because as soon as it beginneth to rest therein, forthwith its expansion is stopped; but it would rather stretch out further and further and break through all multiplicity which in any way might hinder the spirit, and would always maintain a complete and perfect introversion towards the one highest and unchanging good, which is always and everywhere present.

And as often as it doeth this, it will find the face, it will find the most pure and most sweet embrace of the Bridegroom, and the fruition of the Word of the Father, which then is freshly and effectively formed within it.

There it will discover boundless space, in accord with eternity, or with that which is the same as eternity. There within is the fulness of all that can be desired, even though there be many troubles without.

Of this fulness there are two expressions:

the first, that all things are possessed by the soul in union with our Lord, and that in the Spirit and in the affections this word " Son, all that I have is thine, and thine is mine " is heard and understood : the second, that where this is not experienced, the soul glorieth eagerly in its own littleness, in its own nothingness, in infirmities of mind and body, in various contradicting happenings and tribulations, that it is nothing, and can do nothing good of itself, in short, that it glorieth in all that eternal providence alloweth to come upon it.

Thus the soul is pleasing to God, not only when in time of prosperity it doeth all things well, but also when it beareth contrary things, contempt and reproach with an humble and brave heart.

And so, united with the Word, the Bridegroom, and become one thing or one Spirit with Him, the soul saith, " Many a time have they fought against me from my youth up until now, but they have not prevailed against me." They have beaten out and forged many tribulations and troubles upon my back and they work upon it still, but whatever they may choose to forge cannot so burden me that I sink under it, for love beareth every burthen, whether it be outward or inward.

" One thing have I desired of the Lord," which is nothing but Himself, and so passing by everything else, with my whole strength, constantly and unceasingly I will seek after this, and farewell all things which are out of harmony with that one pursuit.

CHAPTER XXXIV

That contemplation and enjoyment of the Divine Word are hindered by extroversion and disturbance of mind: but assisted when the heart is made empty of desires, when a constant gaze upon God is maintained, and when the soul is led to be less and less sensitive to outward events.

WHENEVER a man is beset, disturbed or absorbed by outward things done by others, he may be said to be out of doors, not at home, below, and not above. For turning outwards to conversations concerned merely with matters of sense, and pondering on them, is a hindrance to true inward enjoyment: and so contemplation is never joined with commotion, never with troubles, grievances, disturbances, discussions of others, scrupulosity, or disquietude, springing from whatsoever sources: while these remain, that can never take place, that meeting with the Word which is the most pure and unchangeable embrace of the Bridegroom. But if any man truly and really desireth the embrace of the Word, the Bridegroom, it behoveth him to be stripped bare, to be free, strong and unencumbered by anything, so as to have scarce any choice in the least or greatest matters, except as eternal Providence disposeth, to be wholly content with God and not to allow his peace of mind to depend on the esteem of men or on any happenings.

But whatever may take place, beyond and through all things let him strive without ceasing to be renewed by the powerful look and

union of the Word, and in this let him persevere through all, fully and constantly, within and without. For this purpose it is needful that he prepare a wide, free, unencumbered soul, in nowise straitened, and that he shut out everything alien, lest it contrive to reach the inmost recesses of his heart. And, in a certain sense, he ought to grow hard like a flint, so that various events do him no harm, but on the contrary are often strongly beaten back and made to retreat. For how is it possible for him to be hurt by that which for him is gain whatever may happen? Of all things therefore that come upon him or meet him, let him always reflect: the Lord hath sent this or that in order that by its means I may become more perfect and more pleasing to Him.

CHAPTER XXXV

Whatever troubles us is to be put away from before the Face of Christ, in whose Spirit and Love we ought to walk; since therein we shall be taught all things, and shall be conformed to Him, and shall act towards all creatures in charity, embracing all in God.

WHATEVER begins to be a burthen on the heart, however small it be, let the interior man bring it before the Face of the Word, and it will vanish: and so let him accustom himself to deal with many things in one brief moment and to free himself from them, and to set in order many things that are distorted and involved.

And thus he will be turned back by no inordinate love to anything beneath God, but cleaving to Him with an earnest, upright and steadfast mind, he will dwell and walk in the Heart of Jesus our Love. There is boundless breadth, length, height and depth of all that can be desired : there Jesus our Spouse teacheth us to converse with Him in spirit and in truth without interruption, and admonisheth us to look upward and see how His eternal essence, power and majesty are one with the Father, that He Himself is the " brightness of the Father's glory and the express Image of His substance, upholding all things by the word of His power," in the beginning God with God, by Whom all things were made and out of Whom there is naught that can be desired. He admonisheth us also to look below at His glorious Humanity, full of grace and truly full of all blessing and glory, the Head of all His elect members, our daily food and nourishment, that in spirit and in truth we may drink in inward richness His living Blood which so abundantly floweth without ceasing from His open side, and from whence all good things stream forth to us, that we may be, in a certain manner, all that He is Himself.

By this means we shall be made so to abound and be full that we shall need with Jesus to pour ourselves out continually to all creation, " that God may be all in all." And we shall desire to see this accomplished in others no less than in ourselves, because we ought to desire that every good should be bestowed on all

men, as heartily as God Himself desireth it. Thus we make all the separate and private good of others our own, which is a very ready and easy thing to those who love ; for wherever there is true love it cannot but flow out and love : for there is nothing so fitting, nothing so characteristic of a soul conformed to God as to be continually pouring itself out and giving itself to others. And there is no plainer mark and sign of union with the Word than thus without constraint to live in open-hearted, generous love, giving all things, filling all things with Jesus, so that nothing remains without His direction. Thus, as far as in us lieth, we may fill the heaven and earth and all that is in them with our Love, Who is God: and therefore in the Heart of Jesus we shall hold all the elect gathered together with Him, and we shall present and offer them before the Face of the Father, with a full and expanding heart, setting forth the sorrows and troubles of all in general, and of some in particular, according to the time we have.

Then in every place with our whole heart we offer Him in spirit, with as great longing desire as that with which He offered Himself to the Father. And there between the Divinity and the Humanity, bowing down our spirit in the Heart of Jesus, we find peace upon peace, and pure love, by which we draw everyone between ourselves and Jesus, and embrace them in simple truth. United with Him we easily win the victory, and thus we remain unbroken and unshaken by various events, because we cast

away all hindrances and all that is not in accord with His sacred Heart. And as we bear with even mind all impediments and contrary things, we find that by this strong, powerful look all is brought to naught and becomes as vanishing smoke. United with our Lord we are moved to acts of kindness towards our enemies and to those who defame and trouble us, just as much as towards friends and rulers and those who dwell with us; and we are always ready to yield gently to the movements of others and bend before the wrongs which they do us.

CHAPTER XXXVI

That everything ought to tend towards union with Christ and abiding with Him, and thus to be brought back to its first beginning. What the Christian life is.

TO examine all things keenly, and to pass on, as far as is possible, to a certain pure, essential enjoyment of simple truth, to enter into, and in some way to be transformed into love, and thus to be made secure wholly outside ourselves; to be concerned no less for another's good and success than for our own; to receive the holy Sacraments with great outward devotion and deepest reverence, and effectually to taste their fruit and power within, so that we may be one with Christ and abide in Him and He in us:—it is in order to the attaining of this union and abiding place that all has been done that is done,

here is the fruit, the effect, the end, namely, that the soul may be led back to its first origin, which is God.

To do good deeds of every kind, to suffer every manner of evil, this is the true life of a Christian man.

All other things, whether honours or humiliations, are reached from without, and all pass away with time, and therefore no great care is to be bestowed upon them. But let us study eagerly and earnestly to labour in the grace given us and to remain at rest in regard to all other orderings of the Lord, for ourselves or others. And whatever the Lord hath willed to withhold or hath not given, those things let us hold as He wills and not give them to ourselves.

CHAPTER XXXVII

That reproof and all such things are to be so received and directed that they may increase in us charity and the gentleness of Christ, for they are the instruments of which He makes use.

IF the reproof be just, it is well given, because what we wish is taking place, and being of the same opinion ourselves, we add to the reproof and increase it: if, however, the blame be unjust, as perchance for things of which our heart is not conscious, it is of no consequence to us, because it comes only from without.

Nevertheless, in all contrary things that may happen, justly or unjustly, in the sight of all

men, or in private, let there be no murmur of heart or lips, no complaint, no needless interior entangling or troubling of the mind, in a word, no darkening of the interior look by reason of any outward happenings: but with a silent heart, a humble, firm and peaceful mien, let the mind preserve patience, assured through all of its own well-being.

And in proportion as a broader way is by contrary things of this kind laid open to the mind, so let it expand the more freely, and let it pour forth love, that, as it were, it may feel nothing, shew nothing, except what is fragrant with charity. Thus also whole-heartedly let it enter into that most gentle feeling which Jesus was wont to have, and had in His life and in His Passion.

Let a man therefore abide with the greatest constancy in love, charity, truth and all virtues; and whatever happens, let these remain unspoiled and unhurt, and so all things will lead to profit and gain.

And if all things should outwardly appear twisted, involved and disturbed, yet to a man thus living all things will be at rest, for he enjoyeth a boundless breadth of love within, and according to time, place and cause he sheweth forth without fail those things that belong to pure love, either by meeting, yielding or helping; so as it were to be a faithful instrument of love, prepared always to pass in or out as need requireth.

And so reading, singing, praying, meditating, pondering, labouring, resting, and all other

duties it directeth to this one end, namely, that love may be preserved inviolate within the soul, and outwardly may be manifested in good works. So also it extendeth itself without limit, and its oblations, its vows and all its good works are done and will be done as they are offered generously to God in one simple look.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

That union with Christ is a most pure and sublime state. All men are to be drawn to God by our compassion, our love and our prayers.

"LET Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." Noble indeed and exceeding tender is the Bridegroom Jesus, Who is not effectively united with a soul that is employed with or burdened with anything whatsoever, because He hath nothing at all in common with what is merely passing. Therefore let the soul strive as generously and heartily as possible to suffer all things to pass by and to enjoy and be united with Jesus its Bridegroom, in that love in which He rejoiceth in Himself above and beyond all thought and understanding. And so we ought to stand before our Lord whole-heartedly and reverently and with great faith, and we should eagerly thirst for and drink His warm, life-giving Blood, by which we embrace all men and draw them into Him, the Word, that we may be united in Him, by which also we are

strongly moved to suffer for His Name every kind of inconvenience and injury, and by which also we are led to count as naught what we have to bear from others, whether it be in their persons or in their behaviour, for we shall not for ever be mindful of infirmities, hindrances, feebleness, and imperfections, in which at the present time we all alike groan and with which we struggle.

And because we are entirely unaware how acceptable and glorious each person is, or will be, before our Lord by reason of the perfection and purity that belongs to him, we cannot do better than continually set aside everything unworthy, and embrace all men in truth and love and enjoy them in God, as those with whom we shall live for ever, and strive to unite them in the highest degree with the Heart of Jesus, especially those amongst us who now seem to be less perfect and devoted.

In the meanwhile, as long as we live here in the midst of countless blasts and storms, let the voice of each heart in its own rhythm, its own measure, its own place, ceaselessly make melody before the throne on high : and let the fragrance of a spotless conversation and most chaste desires pour forth sweet odour as incense, and redound to its own beginning : so that as the heavens were made to flow with honey by the wondrous coming in the flesh of the Word of God, the Bridegroom Jesus, by the daily presentation of Himself upon the altar, by the frequent pouring forth of His Spirit and of spiritual beauty on the souls of the elect : so

in their measure let the desires of each rise up on all sides, correspond everywhere with grace, and spread forth themselves and their love one towards another to a boundless extent.

CHAPTER XXXIX

By the renouncing of self-seeking, and by seeking the glory of God and the good of all men, true and unbroken liberty of heart is won, and by this means the soul passes on to the enjoyment of the Truth and of Eternal Love, when it is one with God and all things in all.

NOTHING so unburdeneth the heart and rendereth it free and maketh it to hold converse with our Lord without constraint, and nothing so produces interior recollection after divers outward distractions and multiplicities, as in all things, interior or exterior, temporal or eternal, to be led by no selfish desires or self-seeking, to be drawn by no private attraction or affection to any particular side: but with all one's strength to follow after whatever makes for the honour and glory of God, or for the common good, safety and peace, be this agreeable or troublesome.

This strength of soul doth not oblige a needy man to refuse one thing or another, whether it be great or small: since he knows how to regard all things, to hear, consider and weigh whatever is said or done against himself and what in others is evil or good, namely, what is done hurtful or derogatory, in belittling and

inconveniencing and contemning and lowering of himself, or on the other hand what brings him honour and renown, and yet to be moved by neither one nor the other. And therefore he doth not pour forth his inner strength upon things which please the senses, but passeth through to the interior enjoyment of the simple truth and most chaste love, so that the latter is not hindered by the former, but in each the soul is with our Lord, all things in all.

The End.

To God be praise, honour and glory.

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